TIRUVĀYMOḶI
ENGLISH GLOSSARY

VOLUME III

by

(Jñāna Bhakti Bhūṣaṇa)

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NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION

In this book, Devanagari characters as well as the Tamil alphabet have been transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the international body of orientalists and since then generally acknowledged as the only rational and satisfactory one, ruling out inconsistency, irregularity and redundancy of English spelling.

I. SANSKRIT (Devanagari) SCRIPT

अ a; आ ā; इ i; ई ī; उ u; ऊ ū; ऋ ṛ; ए e; ऐ ai; ओ o; औ ou; ं ṁ; ः ḥ; क् k; ख् kh; ग् g; घ् gh; ङ् ṅ; च् c; छ् ch; ज् j; झ् jh; ञ् ñ; ट् ṭ; ठ् ṭh; ड् ḍ; ढ् ḍh; ण् ṇ; त् t; थ् th; द् d; ध् dh; न् n; प् p; फ् ph; ब् b; भ् bh; म् m; य् y; र् r; ल् l; व् v, श् ś; ष् ṣ; स् s; ह् h;

क ka; का kā; कि ki; की kī; कु ku; कू kū; के ke; कै kai; को ko; कौ kou; कं ḳ; कः kaḥ.
Likewise, for all other consonants.

Dot below ḥ gives the visarga (:), dot above ṁ gives the anusvara (·) while the dot below ṇ gives the sound, as in 'gone'.

II. TAMIL SCRIPT

அ a; ஆ ā; இ i; ஈ ī; உ u; ஊ ū; எ e; ஏ ē; ஐ ai; ஒ o; ஓ ō; ஔ au; க் k; ங் ṅ; ச் c; ஞ் ñ; ட் t; ண் ṇ; த் t; ந் n; ப் p; ம் m; ய் y; ர் r; ல் l; வ் v; ழ் ḷ; ள் ḷ; ற் ṟ; ன் ṉ; ஃ k̲; ஜ் j; ஶ் ś; ஷ் ṣ; ஸ் s; ஹ் h; க்ஷ் kṣ;

க ka; கா kā; கி ki; கீ kī; கு ku; கூ kū; கெ ke; கே kē; கை kai; கொ ko; கோ kō; கௌ kau; கः kaḥ.
Likewise, for all other consonants.

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BOOK VI

Sixth Centum First Decad (VI-1)
(Vaikal pūṅ kaḻivāy)

Preamble

We saw in the preceding centum from V-7 and onwards the Āḻvār seeking refuge in successive Pilgrim centres, at the feet of the Lord enshrined there. If the surrender at the feet of the Lord which should yield the result as a matter of course, did not meet with immediate response from the Lord, it was because He willed that the contemporary world as well as posterity should benefit through the Āḻvār's scintillating hymns flowing from his sweet lips. It is indeed our great good fortune that the Āḻvār was not immediately lifted up to Heaven. In V-10, the Alvar prayed intensely for the acceleration of his union with the Lord and now he seeks out the Lord at Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr, a pilgrim centre in Keralā, but is too feeble to reach that place. The next best he could do in such a forlorn state, was to acquaint the Lord with his critical condition through some one. The Āḻvār, once again, gets tranformed as a Nāyakī and sends some birds and bees to convey her message to the Lord. The birds, with their pair of wings, typify the devout, endowed with *great knowledge* and *good conduct*, the efficient Preceptors, with a happy blending of these two essential requisites, for serving as an effective medium between Man and God.

This technique of the Āḻvār sending messages to the Lord through birds, bees etc., has already been elaborated upon, vide preamble to I-4. There are four decads, in the whole work, where such messages are sent, the other three being I-4, VI-8 and IX-7. Whereas the message in I 4 was sent to the Lord in His 'Vyūha' aspect at the Milky ocean, the seat of His creative activity, the present one is held to have been addressed to the Lord in His 'Vibhava' or Incarnate Forms. As the message is being sent to the Lord in His 'Arca' (Iconic) Form at Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr, it might be questioned how the Āḻvār is stated to have sent emissaries to the Lord in His Incarnate Forms. The clue for this can be had from the tenth stanza of this decad, where the Āḻvār specifically mentions Śrī Rāma, stationed at that pilgrim centre. Further, the

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message in the last of the four decads, referred to above, namely, IX-7, is addressed to the Lord in His *Arca* (Iconic) Form and there is hardly any need for duplication in this regard. In I-4, the Āḻvār invoked the Lord's special trait of forgiveness, while, in this decad, the accent is on His pledge, the creed of extending protection to His devotees, seeking Him ardently, vide also aphorism 156 of 'Ācārya Hṛdayaṁ'.

vaikal pūṅ kaḻivāy vantu, mēyum kurukiṉaṅkāḷ!
cey koḷ cennel uyar tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr uṟaiyum
kai koḷ cakkarattu eṇ kaṇivāyp perumāṇaik kaṇṭu,
kaikaḷ kūppi, collīr-viṇaiyāṭṭiyēṇ kātaṉmaiyē. (VI–1–1)

Translation

Ye herds of Heron, always seeking food in water-logged land!
Go unto my Lord with fruit like lips and discus in hand,
Who does for ever in Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr reside,
Where there are plenty of rich paddy fields;
And convey the depth of this sinner's love, with your hands, folded.

Notes

(i) The Nāyakī describes the place to which the herons have to go and the hard-hearted Lord to whom they have to report her unique love, emanating from a tender heart. The description of the destination should ir deed tempt the birds, for there too, they can have plenty of food. Hard-hearted though He might be, the Nāyakī cannot lift her mind from His fascinating lips and that too, on the heels of her enjoyment of Kṛṣṇāvatār, in the immediately preceding decad.

(ii) The inner meaning of this song, as brought out in aphorism 154 of 'Ācārya Hṛdayaṁ! is given below:

An Ācārya (Preceptor) of spotless purity in and out, who revels in God-enjoyment in the company of his inseparable disciples and attends pious gatherings along with them, is being sought out, as an efficient medium for securing communion with the Lord.

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(iii) The Āḻvār, who had tasted the Lord's condescending love and amazing simplicity during those blissful moments of union with Him, is now inclined to disdain Him for His aloofness, the predominant trait of His transcendent (Paratva) aspect. This is reflected in her warning to the birds to approach the Lord with folded hands, with due regard to His might and majesty.

kātal meṉ peṭaiyōṭu uṭaṉ mēyum karu nārāy!
vēta vēḷvi oli muḷaṅkum taṉ tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr
nātaṉ, ñālam ellām uṇṭa nam perumāṉaik kaṇṭu,
pātam kaitoḻutu, paṇiyir-aṭiyēṉ-tiṟamē. (VI–1–2)

Translation

Oh, Stork of complexion fine, move you do in search of food,
With your beloved mate: go and report my condition, with hands folded.
Unto my Lord, Master of the Universe, Who sustained the worlds
During deluge and now in cool Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr resides
Amid vedic chantings and rituals with a flourish of trumpets loud.

Notes

(i) The Nāyakī is commissioning a stork to go and reverently report her condition at the feet of the Lord who stands pledged to redeem His ardent votaries, but now remains wholly absorbed in the vedic chantings and rituals put through with great eclat in Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr by its pious brahmins. It is said of Śrī Rāma that He would be present wherever vedic chantings and ritualistic proceedings were going on.

(ii) It is noteworthy that the Nāyakī advises her emissary to prostrate at the feet of the Lord. This could either reflect her attitude, already commented upon, in para (iii) of the notes below the preceding song or stress the correct code of conduct. It is no use paying obeisance without actually prostrating before the worship-worthy. The great Naṅcīyar used to say: " Whenever I saw a

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devotee of Viṣṇu and I fell at his feet with my head touching them, it was only then, I felt as if I ate my fill and all my hunger vanished".

tiṟaṅkaḷ āki eṅkum ceykaḷ ūṭu uḷal puḷḷiṉaṅkāḷ!
ciṟanta celvam malku tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr uṟaiyum
kaṟaṅku cakkarak kaik kaṉivāyp perumāṉaik kaṇṭu,
iṟ ṅki, nīr toḻutu, paṇiyīr-aṭiyēṉ iṭarē. (VI–1–3)

Translation

Ye, birds flocking together all over the flush fields,
Go and submit at the feet of my red-lipped Lord, Who wields
The revolving discus and in Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr resides,
The abode of riches in plenty, how in misery this vassal fades.

Note

It is the natural habit of the birds to flock together and go hither and thither, in search of food but the God-infatuated Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī thinks that they are also moving about in search of God, out of consideration for her. c.f. II-1. She tells the birds that the Lord whom they are after, resides in Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr and advises them to go and meet Him there and, after making a low obeisance to Him, reverently report her miserable condition also. The birds ask the Nāyakī how the Lord could stay at that centre, forgetting all about her and the Nāyakī clarifies at once that it is the immense wealth of the place that has kept Him engrossed with it. whereas for her there is no greater wealth than her Lord, the 'Śṛya śṛyaṁ'.

iṭar il pōkam mūḻki, iṉṉuntu āṭum maṭa aṉṉaṅkāḷ!
viṭal il vēṭa oli muḻaṅkum taṉ tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr
kaṭaliṉ mēṉippirāṉ, kaṇṇaṉai, neṭumālaik kaṇṭu,
uṭalam naintu, orutti urukum eṉṟu uṇarttumiṉē. (VI–1–4)

Translation

Ye, modest swans, in joy immersed and to misery unknown!
Go and meet the Lord Supreme, the sea-hued Benefactor great,

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Who, in cool Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr resides, where do reverberate
Vedic chantings and report, ' Here's a woman dwindling down'.

Notes

Addressing the swans who always move in strength and have never, therefore, known the pangs of separation from each other, the Nāyakī asks them to go to Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr and tell her Lord that here, at this end, is a woman languishing miserably, due to separation from Him.

The swans, immersed in joy and flocking together, denote those in incessant communion with the Lord, speaking the same language (*i.e.*) the language of rapturous devotion, as the Āḻvārs did.

uṇarttal ūṭal uṇarntu, uṭaṉ mēyum maṭa aṉṉaṅkāḷ!
tiṇ ṛtta vaṇṭalkaḻmēl caṅku cērum tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr
puṇartta pūn taṉ-tuḻāy muṭi nam perumāṉaik kaṇṭu,
puṇartta kaiyiṉarāy, aṭiyēṉukkum pōṟṟumiṉē. (VI–1–5)

Translation

Ye, inseparable swans, against the ill-effects of separation forewarned!
Go to our Sire, with cool tuḻacī garland on His crown adorned,
Who resides in Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr, on whose soft sands
Conches converge and worship Him, on my behalf also, with folded hands.

Notes

(i) Estrangement on some slight pretext, followed by reconciliation, culminating in union between the lover and the beloved, are factors which commonly characterise connubial relationship. The swans, moving always together, do not, however, have to pass through these vicissitudes.

(ii) The Nāyakī's request to the swans to worship the Lord on her behalf as well and sing the song of benediction unto Him, sets the pace for those who are not fortunate enough to visit the various pilgrim centres but keenly

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miss the bliss. These persons request the fortunate visitors to those places to worship on their behalf also. It is not exactly worship by proxy but the expression of one's yearning for worship.

pōṟṟi yāṉ irantēṉ, puṉṉaimēl uṟai pūṅ kuyilkāḷ!
cēṟṟil vāḻai tuḷḷum tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr uṟaiyum
āṟṟal āḷi aṅkai amarar-perumāṉaik kaṇṭu,
māṟṟam koṇṭaruḷir-maiyal tīrvatu oruvaṉṉamē. (VI–1–6)

Translation

I pray unto ye, lovely koels, dwelling up the laurel trees,
To meet the Lord of the Celestials, wielding the powerful discus
Who, in Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr resides, where revel the fishes
In marshy lands and bring unto me heartening news.

Note

Up the laurel trees: The laurel (Puṉṉai in Tamil) tree on the west bank of the sacred tank within the precincts of the Temple of Lord Raṅganātha has come in for special mention in Śloka 49 of the first centum of 'Śrī Raṅgarāja Stavaṁ' of Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar. It is said to have imbibed the fragrance of Tiruvāymoḷi. This goes to show that generations of devotees have sat under the shade of this ancient tree and reverently chanted Tiruvāymoḷi and delved into its inner meanings, discoursing on them. In this process, all the aroma emanating from those recitals and discourses attached itself to the tree, providing it first class nourishment too. It is very likely that the sweet-voiced birds (Koels), resting on the laurel tree, refer to these very devotees.

oruvaṉṉam ceṟṟu pukku, eṉakku oṉṟu urai-oṉ kiḷiyē!
ceru oṉ pūm poḻil cūḻ cekkar vēla'ṭ tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr
karu vaṉṉam, ceyya vāy, ceyya kaṇ, ceyya kai, ceyya kāl,
ceru oṉ cakkaraṁ, caṅku aṭaiyāḻam tiruntak kaṇṭē. (VI–1–7)

Translation

Lovely parrot! whatever be the odds you should find your way
To Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr of red soil with flower gardens lovely and say

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Just one word on my behalf unto my Lord of dark hue,
Lips, eyes, hands and feet, all red, holding the discus bright
And the conch ins parable. spotting Him well from these
[clues.

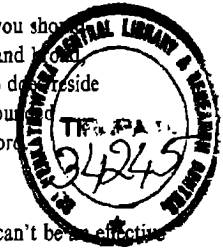
Note

The parrot signifies the Preceptors, true and steadfast, who faithfully pass on the learning gathered by them from their masters, without deviation or distortion. The parrot is known to repeat just what it hears. The parrot in question is advised by the Nāyakī to somehow reach the intended destination turning a blind eye to the enchanting scenery *en route*, lest it should succumb to the way-side attractions. Even at that end, the emissary shall, for her sake, submit to indignity, if any, heaped on it, such as caning etc., by way of denying it access to the Sovereign Lord. By rendering service to the Nāyakī, the emissary will be the first beneficiary the immediate recipient of the Lord's favours, much ahead of the Nāyakī herself, even as Hanumān, on his return from his pioneering visit to Laṅkā, got himself locked in Lord Rāma's sweet embrace (parṣvaṅgo Hanūmataḥ), a month ahead of Sītā's reunion with the Lord.

tiruntak kaṇṭu, eṉakku oṉṟu uraiyāy-cṉ ciṟu pūvāy!
cerunti, ñāḻal, makiḻ, puṉṉai, cūḻ taṇ tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr
perum taṇ tāmaraikkaṇ, peru nīḻ muṭi, nāl taṭantōḷ,
karun tiṇ mā mukil pōl tirumēṉi aṭikaḷaiyē. (VI–1–8)

Translation

You lovely little Pūvāi, go and see closely you sho
My cloud-hued Lord with lotus eyes, cool and l
Huge crown and hefty shoulders four, Who d reside
In cool Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr, by lovely trees surrou
And about Him come and tell me a nice wor



Note

Unless the emissary is a keen observer, he can't be an effective messenger. The Nāyakī wants the little lovely bird to have a close look at the Lord in Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr in all details and

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narrate to her what the little one saw. This is one way of the God-lover sustaining herself.

aṭikaḷ kaitoḻutu, alarmēl acaiyum aṉṉaṅkāḷ!
viṭivai cuṅku olikkum tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr uṟaiyum
kaṭiya māyaṉ-aṉṉai, kaṇṇaṉai, neṭumālaik kaṇṭu,
koṭiya valviṉaiyēṉ-tiṟam kūṟumiṉ-vēṟukoṇṭē. (VI–1–9)

Translation

Ye, swans, gliding gently on flowers! report you should
About this fell sinner, in secret and with joined palms,
At the feet of Kaṇṇaṉ, my wondrous Lord of love supreme
Unto devotees, Who does in Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr always reside
Where, at day-break, sweet strains from the conch could be heard.

Notes

In Secret:

When the Lord is alone with His consort, all the attendants having dispersed after discharging their respective duties.

At the feet:

Getting hold of the Lord's feet is the surest way of evoking response. ' anatikramaṇīyaṁ hi caraṇagrahaṇaṁ '.

vēṟukoṇṭu ummai yāṉ irantēṉ; veṟi vaṇṭiṉaṅkāḷ!
tēṟu nīrp pampai vaṭapālait tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr
māṟu il pōr arakkaṉ maṭil nīṟu eḻac ceṟṟu, ukanta,
ēṟu cēvakaṉārkku eṉṉaiyum uḷaḷ eṉmiṉkaḷē. (VI–1–10)

Translation

You, sweet-smelling bees, with great respect do I entreat
That unto Him (Lord Rāma) of valour great, Who did the ramparts rout
Of the mighty demon and now has His abode
In Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr, north of river Pampai, with its waters limpid,
You do resort and say, here languishes one of His wards.

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Note

The Nāyaki has all along been commissioning different birds to convey her message to the Lord, but now she reverently approaches the bees, even as Śri Rāma chose Hanumān for the special assignment of handing over His ring to Sītā. The Nāyaki requests the bees to tell Śri Rāma that He should not rest on His oars with an air of complacence that He has already done everything for Sītā and through her, for her tribe, as a whole; actually, she (Nāyaki) is languishing here, at this end, although she is also one of His many wards.

miṉ koḷ cēr purinūl-kuṟaḷ āy, akal ñālam koṇṭa
vaṉ kaḷvaṉ aṭimēl kurukūṟc caṭakōpaṉ conna
paṉ koḷ āyira'tuḷ ivai pattum tiruvaṇvaṇṭūrkku
iṉkoḷ pāṭal vallār mataṉar, miṉṉiṭai yavarkkē. (VI–1–11)

Translation

Those that chant these songs ten, highly delicious,
Which unto Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr pertain, out of the mellifluous
Thousand, composed by Caṭakōpaṉ of Kurukūr, adoring the feet
Of the Lord, Who, as Vāmana, wearing on His person radiant,
The sacred thread charming, took (from Bali) on the sly, the worlds,
Will unto the Lord be dear like the lovers unto their beloveds.

Note

The chanters of this decad will be coveted by the Lord and His devotees, the Apsarās in Heaven.

Sixth Centum—Second Decad (VI-2)
(Miṉ iṭai maṭavārkaḷ)

Preamble

In this decad, the Āḻvār strikes an entirely new note, making a bold departure, rather, in refreshing contrast to the earlier ones. The Saint, who was hitherto pining for the Lord's presence and crying out his heart, now keeps Him at bay, when He eventually

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turns up in post-haste (even as He rushed to Gajendra's aid) in response to the Nāyakī's piteous appeal in the last decad, conveyed to the Lord through her special emissaries. The Nāyakī resents the Lord's delayed appearance and arraigns Him for having strayed elsewhere, making love to the damsels of His special preference and He is being asked to go back to them. The door is shut against Him, a movement in the contrary direction indeed! But there is nothing uncommon about this, as this is a natural ingredient of convivial love, which is super-sensitive to, and extremely intolerant of the lapses on the part of either partner, the overzealous female, in particular, being critical of the remotest risk of alienation of the male from her, by his getting under the spell of any other lady-the characteristic feminine jealousy, keen and cruel. Actually, the Nāyakī's pangs of separation even egged her on to the extreme step of putting an end to her life, rather than eking out a miserable existence.

Of the nine kinds of relationship subsisting between the Lord (Super Soul) and the Individual Soul, as set out in the Śloka "Pitā ca rakṣakaḥ Śeṣī, Bharthā Jñeyo Ramāpatiḥ....." the husband-wife relationship is attracted here. The strained relationship such as the one exhibited in this decad, did subsist, as a temporary phase, between Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs. The Nāyakī would now seem to have got into the mood of the Gopīs. Similar treatment is noticeable in Kulaśekara Āḻvār's Perumāḷ Tirumoḻi (of Ērmalar Pūṅkuḻal) and Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār's Periya Tirumoḻi (Kāṭil Kaṭippiṭṭu).

miṉ iṭai maṭavārkaḷ-niṉ aruḷ cūṭuvār-muṉṉu nāṉ atu añcuvaṉ;
maṉ uṭai ilaṅkai araṇ kāynta māyavaṉē!
uṉṉuṭaiya cuṭāyam nāṉ aṟivaṉ; iṉi atukoṇṭu ceyvatu eṉ?
eṉṉuṭaiya pantum kaḻalum tantu, pōku nampī! (VI–2–1)

Translation

I am afraid, You and I, the thin-waisted favourites of Yours
Will scold, all Your mischief do I know, yet it no longer matters.
The ramparts of Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā, You pulled down in anger great,

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You, perfect One of wondrous deeds, from here You better depart
And go anywhere You like but leave my playthings here, all right.

Notes

(i) Reference to playthings, in this song, would make it appear that Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī and the Lord were playing some game and the latter suddenly left. The Nāyakī felt piqued by this sudden departure of the game-partner so that, when He presented Himself later on, she would keep mum. And now, the Lord tried to coax her, in ever so many ways: He lavished epithets on her describing her as a thin-waisted beauty and so on. Even then, she would not respond and the frustrated Lover got hold of the games-materials lying on the ground (Ball etc.) and addressed them amorously. Well, the farthest limit of provocation had been reached and the Nāyakī could no longer resist coming out of her shell. She rebuked the Lord, saying that she was not the thin-waisted beauty referred to by Him and He would do well to go back to those beauties with whom He had been indulging prior to coming down to her. She also cautioned Him that, in case those ladies got to know of His having come over to her, they would scold both Him and her. But then, she was severing her connections with Him and the displeasure of those other ladies was, therefore, of no consequence to her. As the Lord was about to leave the place, picking in hand the games-materials, the Nāyakī sternly asked Him to leave her playthings and go. It may be recapitulated that, in the preamble to this decad, the Nāyakī was stated to be in a desperate mood, ready even to put an end to her life. What else is it but (spiritual) death when she spells out anything as hers, in His presence? That Savant Ciṟiyāttāṉ would point out that the notion of 'mine' and 'not mine' reigned supreme in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's mind and this eventually led to the destruction of his race. Right

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at the commencement of Bhagavad Gitā, he asked Sañjaya: Say, Sañjaya, say what wrought *my people* (māmakā) and the Pāṇḍavas ".

(ii) The Lord's destruction of Rāvaṇ's Laṅkā is also taken by the Nāyakī with a pinch of salt. She sees in it an attempt on His part to draw into His broad net, the m mbers of the weaker sex, by making it appear that He did so much, ate no food, spent sleepless days and nights, bunded the ocean, fought a pitched battle with the formidable Rāvaṇa and destroyed his citadel, all for the sake of a woman. The Nāyakī spitefully declares that she could very well see through His game.

pōku nampī! uṉ tāmaraipurai kaṇ-iṇaiyum, cevvāy muṟuvalum,
ākulaṅkaḷ ceyya, aḻi tiṟkē nōṟṟōṉē yām;
tōkai mā mayilārkuḻ-niṉ aruḷ cūṭṭuvār-cevi ōcai vaittu eḻa
ākaḷ pōkaviṭṭu, kuḻal ūtu pōyiruntē. (VI–2–2)

Translation

Get thee gone, oh Sire; we womenfolk seem born to dwindle
Under the spell of Your lotus eyes and bewitching smiles
On Your red lips, better go and graze the cows,
Playing the flute from behind unto the recipients of Your love
Having locks lovely like the spread-out plumes of the peacock.

Note

When asked by the Nāyakī to get away, the Lord entered into an argument with her, saying that she could not claim ownership of the games materials and that apart, it would be most uncharitable on her part to expel Him who had come over to her, out of deep love. The Lover advanced towards the Nāyakī with bewitching smile and sweet glances but the Nāyakī, still smarting under a sense of deliberate neglect by the Lover, observed that His smiles and glances actually sapped her and other women, unfortunate like her, rather than sustain and bade Him to keep grazing the cows and playing the flute for the delectation of the lucky damsels of Gokula, the recipients of His favours, with lovely locks. The description of the lovely locks of the Lover's favourites

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given here, initially came from His lips, complimenting the Nāyakī but she would not acknowledge it and she spitefully turned it on to those other ladies, basking in the sunshine of His love.

pōyiruntu, niṉ puḷḷuvam aṟiyātavarkku urai, nampī! niṉ ceyya
vāy iruṅ kaṇiyum, kaṇkaḷum viparītam in nāḷ;
vēy irum taṭam tōḷiṇār it tiruvaruḷ peṟuvār evarkol-
mā irum kaṭalaik kaṭainta perumānālē? (VI–2–3)

Translation

Oh, Sire, better keep off from us and try Your viles
On girls unwary; indeed Your red fruit-like lips and eyes
Are more charming than ever before; I know not who are those,
With bamboo-like shoulders fine that shall be blest
To enjoy this great Churner of the ocean, deep and vast.

Note

The Lord who was asked to go and fend the cows and play the flute, as in the last song, affirmed that He could play the flute and give vent to His love all right, only in the company of His beloved ones, of which the Nāyakī was indeed the crown jewel. But the Nāyakī was adamant and retorted that she would not be led away by His guiles any more and that He would rather play His pranks on unwary customers elsewhere and get on with them. The Lord appealed to her once again, asking her to behold His eagerness to taste the bliss of kissing her lips and gazing at her charming figure. Lo! she found His lips and eyes even more charming than ever before. Overpowered that she was by the Lord's exquisite charm, she couldn't help giving expression to it, even in the midst of her feminine rancour. She thought within herself, who those blessed damsels would be, that shall have the most enviable rapport with the charming Lord, like unto the Divine Mother who got at Him through the churning of the Milky ocean.

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ālin̲ nil̲ ilai, ēl̲ ulakum uṇṭu, aṉṟu nī kiṭantāy; un̲ māyaṅkaḷ
mēlai vāṉavarum aṟiyār; iṉi em paramē?
vēlin̲ nēr taṭam kaṇṇiṇār viḻaiyāṭu cūḻalaic cūḻavē niṉṟu,
kāli mēykka vallāy! emmai nī kaḷaṟēlē. (VI–2–4)

Translation

Aren't You the One who once reposed on a fig-leaf tender,
Holding all the worlds in Your stomach? Your wondrous deeds,
How can we know when even the Celestials can't comprehend?
Oh, Lord, tending cows near about damsels with eyes like
Don't tantalise us with white lies any more. [spear

Note

The Lord refuted the Nāyakī's allegation of hollowness and insincerity and put it back on her and her mates, saying that He was absolutely forthright and straightforward and it was only they that were full of viles. The Nāyakī was, however, quick to point out the incompatibility of His reposing on a tender fig-leaf afloat, holding, as a tender babe, all the worlds inside His tummy and added that His mysterious deeds baffled even the exalted Celestials. The Lord then explained, rather apologetically, that He got detained by His Mother, who had asked Him to grace the cows, giving Him the stick and that the Nāyakī should not frown at Him to such an extent for this delay, beyond His control. The Nāyakī was, however, in no mood to swallow this fabrication and scorned that, in the name of grazing the cows, He would have been after girls of His special preference. The bubble having been pricked, the Lord kept on shilly-shallying. The Nāyakī cut Him short, saying that He need not tarry any longer and tantalise her with all lies and that He would rather ply His trade with those damsels with fine bamboo-like shoulders, with whom all His pretensions might pass muster.

kaḷarēl nampī! un̲ kaitavam maṇṇum viṇṇum naṅku aṟiyum;
tiṉ cakkara
niḷaṟu tol paṭaiyāy! uṇakku oṉṟu uṇarttuvaṉ nāṉ̲;
maḷaṟu tēṉ mol'yārkaḷ niṉ aruḷ cūṭuvār maṇam vāṭi niṟka,'em
kuḷaṟu pūvaiyoṭum kiḷiyōṭum kuḷakēlē. (VI–2–5)

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Translation

Oh. Sire, address not unto us such shallow words,
Your viles are well-known, in all the worlds,
You. wielder of the ancient discus, mighty and mobile!
Let me make You realise that desist You shall
From playing with the warbling Pūvai and parrots over here
Lest You should the minds of Your sweet-tongued favourites injure.

Note

The Lord suggests that they should seek arbitration to prove that He is the damned liar, they are dubbing Him to be. The Nāyakī, however, rules out the necessity for such a course for His stratagems are too well known, both on Earth and in Heaven. Did He not take advantage of the screen raised by the smoke from the incense burnt by the denizens in Heaven just after His sacramental bath and come down here as Kṛṣṇa and go back to the celestium, a hundred years after, by which time the smoke subsided? The Lord's holy attendants in Heaven were not aware of His departure during the interval. Again, all that He did as Śrī Kṛṣṇa is history indeed! And yet, the Lord insists that a wise and impartial witness should be called upon to sit in judgement. The Nāyakī rejoins that there is no dearth of witnesses and, for the matter of that, the discus in His hand is enough to knock the bottom of His case. Did He not once say that He would not take up arms in the battle of Mahābhārata and eventually go back on His plighted word? Cornered thus, the Lord kept silent, hanging His head down. Thereupon, the Nāyakī advised Him to listen to her, in case He was keen on finding a way out of this impasse. The Omniscient Lord was being advised and yet, He took it all in good parts and started praising the Nāyaki's speech as honey and so on. The Nāyakī took exception to this and she and her mates withdrew after making the sarcastic observation that the sweet-tongued damsels in His good books, were elsewhere. Even then, the Lord wouldn't leave the place and started caressing the Pūvai, the little warbler, and the parrots there. Seeing this from a distance, the Nāyakī warned that He would certainly prejudice those

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other ladies, the lucky recipients of His grace, by going over here and, on the top of that, fondling the birds living at this end. The Nāyakī, therefore, advised Him to hasten to those ladies.

kuḻaki, eṅkaḷ kuḻamaṇaṅkoṇṭu, kōyiṉmai ceytu, kaṉmam oṉṟu paḻaki yām iruppōm-paramē it tiru–aruḷkaḷ? [illai; aḻakiyār, iv ulakam mūṉṟukkum tēvimai takuvār, palar uḷar; kaḻakam ēṟēl, nampī! uṉakkum iḻaitē kaṉmamē. (VI–2–6)

Translation

Oh, Sire, 'tis no use Your riding rough-shod, fondling our dolls,
What You are, long association with you has shown us well,
Targets we aren't for Your amorous advances, others there are indeed,
Fit to be Your consorts, of beauty surpassing in all the worlds;
Force You shall not into our group, verily Your deeds
Will put even You to shame and make You hang Your head

Note

Sensing the pulse of the Nāyakī, even the birds flew off and now, only the dolls remain on the scene. The Lord starts fondling the dolls but the Nāyakī prods Him, saying that all this behaviour will not help Him. The Lord, however, swears that He is hers, contemplating her all the time. This draws forth a sharp rebuff from the Nayaki that she has known enough of Him and His white lies, coming off in an unbroken succession, with perfect ease. This again gives a handle to the Lord who remarks that, being used to His pranks so well, they would sorely miss them all, if He went away. So saying, He stays on hob-nobbing, much to the chagrin of the Nāyakī who burst out that all His silly pranks were more than she could endure and that He would do well to turn His attention on those other favourites of His, of matchless beauty. She further warns Him not to force Himself any more into their group. But even this curt warning would not deter Him and He lingers on, knowing as He does, in His heart of hearts, that although the Nāyakī's

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tongue utters such harsh words, inwardly she would want Him to stay on and bandy words like these, with her. And the Nāyakī frowns at Him, saying that He would fall low in His own estimation, if only He cared to examine the propriety of His conduct-literally, a re-enactment of the 'Kṛṣṇa-Gopīs episode'. Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar would exclaim:

"Oh, what an amazing simplicity! the Lord of the Universe, the repository of all auspicious traits, the Supreme Controller of all, is feeling helpless before a handfull of shepherdesses, unable to move either way, neither go inside nor get out of the place. How strange it is that sages Vyāsa and Parāśara could not dwell on this astounding aspect of the Lord! Well, who else but these Āḻvār Saints, soaked in God-love, could comprehend and handle this theme which passeth all understanding of the common man who can't readily bring himself to believe that the Supreme Lord could ever condescend to reduce Himself to such a strange pass?

kaṉmam aṉṟu eṅkaḷ kaiyil pāvai paṛippatu; kaṭal-ñālam uṇṭiṭṭa
niṉmalā! neṭiyāy! uṉakkēlum, piḻai piḻaiyē;
vaṉmamē colli, emmai nī viḻaiyāṭuti; atu kēṭkil eṉ aimmār
taṉma-pāvam eṉṉār; oru nāṉṟu taṭi-piṇakkē. (VI–2–7)

Translation

Oh, immaculate Lord, you once gulped down the worlds sea-bound,
It hardly befits You, oh, great One, to squeeze from our hands
Our playthings; a mistake is a mistake even if by You committed,
Words you whisper, we dare not repeat and with us you flirt;
Surely, our brethren, when they get to know, will feel hurt,
For good or bad they wouldn't care and You they might hit.

Notes

(i) Finding the Gopīs terribly vexed with Him, Śrī Kṛṣṇa bade good-bye to them, wishing them well and told them that He would, however, be taking with Him, His playthings. But the Gopīs lost no time in picking up

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those pieces, with a view to detaining Him and prolonging the controversy. This gave Śrī Kṛṣṇa the golden opportunity He was looking for, to come in physical contact with the Gopīs and snatch the materials from their hands. The Gopīs screamed that this was not the kind of job, expected of Him, to which He replied that this was too petty a job for Him Who had gulped down all the worlds. While conceding His great ability, the Gopīs pointed out that, however big He might be, mistakes committed by Him cannot be overlooked. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tried, in vain, to refute this by saying that He was immaculate and, therefore, above mistakes. At this stage, the Lord pretended to be non-plussed and whispered quite a few secrets into the ears of the Gopīs and they administered a stern warning that He would be belaboured by their brothers without any hesitation, if they got to know about His silly behaviour and the stupid things He spoke to them (Gopīs).

(ii) The secrets whispered into the ears of the Gopīs by the Lord, referred to in (i) above, should, in the particular context of Saint Nammāḻvār re-enacting the old scene of the days gone-by, be taken as *God's secrets with His Saints.* While Emār was discoursing on this song, a few disciples asked him, "What are the secrets, Sire, which the Lord spoke to the Saint?" He replied: "When the Saint, illumined by God, has himself pronounced them as secret, how can you expect me to spell them out?'

piṇakki, yāvaiyum yāvarum piḻaiyāmal pētittum pētiyātatu ōr kaṇakku il kīrtti veḻḻak katir ñāṇa mūrttiyiṇāy!
iṇakki, emmai em toḻimār viḻaiyāṭap pōtumiṉ eṉṉap pōntōmai uṇakki, nī vaḻaittāl, eṉ collār ukavātavarē? (VI–2–8)

Translation

Oh, Sire, You are the embodiment of all that knowledge radiant,
You keep without name and form all things sentient and non-sentient
At the time of dissolution and at creation You do sort them out
And put the species back in their spheres, clear and cogent;

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(We knew not You'd be here) our mates brought us for play.
If You hugged us close, what would the unfriendly say?

Note

When the Gopīs threatened to get Śrī Kṛṣṇa beaten, He took up the challenge and shouted at them. The Gopīs coolly told Him, they had known all about Him and there was no need for Him to make all that fuss. When called upon by Him to cite what exactly they had known about Him, they stated, as in the first four lines of this stanza. Śrī Kṛṣṇa then questioned them how, despite all that knowledge they dared to get Him belaboured and elicited the reply that one so great, should not meddle with those frail little girls who had come there to play, not knowing that He would also be there. There was a vast gulf of difference between His play and theirs. His was the creation, sustentation and dissolution of the Sportive Universe (Līlā Vibhūti) whereas they were engaged in simple games, with balls and dolls. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was asked to go His own way, leaving them alone, free to go on with their play. So saying, the Gopīs were about to withdraw themselves but Śrī Kṛṣṇa intercepted them and would not allow them to retreat. The Gopīs remonstrated that, if He encircled and hugged them, personally they had nothing to say, but it was likely to be criticised by the unfriendly spectators around, not aware of the intimate, indissoluble bond that subsists between the individual souls and the Super-Soul. It is here, the Gopīs gave out their real mind, hitherto concealed by their rough exterior.

ukavaiyāl neñcam uḷ uruki, uṉ tāmarait taṭam kaṇ viḷikaḷiṉ
aka valaip paṭuppāṉ aḷittāy uṉ tiruvaṭiyāl;
tākavu ceytilai; eṅkal ciṟṟilum, yām aṭu ciṟu cōṟum kaṇṭu, niṉ
muka oḷi tikaḻa muṟuval ceytu niṉṟilaiyē. (VI–2–9)

Translation

Smile You could and watch with Your face bright,
The castles we built in our play and the food we cooked,

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But You kicked them all, You have indeed no heart.
Just to trap us into the sweet looks
From Your large, lotus eyes, with our hearts melting down.

Note

In spite of His intercepting the Gopīs, they went their own way, playing games like building houses and cooking food. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, literally pining for their sweet glances, albeit by way of quarrelling with Him, kicked all those things out. Knowing His mind quite well, the Gopīs looked at Him squarely and addressed Him, as above. The inner (esoteric) meaning of this is:

Those engaged in God-love quite often undergo the pangs of separation, when He does not oblige them with His sweet presence and the communion gets snapped. To avoid this painful contingency, these very people switch on to worldly affairs. But the Lord would not give them up and His lovely feet drag them back into His fold, kicking out their erstwhile aberration, the tendency to drift away from Him.

niṉṟu iraṅ'ku muṭiyiṉāy! irupattōr kāl araṟu kaḷaikaṭṭa
veṉṟi vāḷ maḻuvā! viyaṉ ñālam muṉ paṭaittāy!
iṉṟu iv āyar kulattai viṭṭu uyyat tōṉṟiya karumāṇikkac cuṭar!
niṉ-'aṉṉāl naḷivē paṭuvōm eṉṟum. āycciyōmē. (VI–2–10)

Translation

Oh, Sire of sapphire hue You sport the crown grand
With Your axe triumphant You did root out the kings
For generations, the vast Universe You created once,
And now You are here to redeem this shepherd clan,
But we shepherdesses are by You tormented for ever.

Note

The rancour of the overzealous Gopīs would obviously not last long, as it is but a temporary phase, an interim facet of connubial relationship, culminating in the reunion of the lover and the beloveds. Śrī Kṛṣṇa didn't merely kick the houses etc, put up by the Gopīs during play, but kicked their rancour out and made them gaze at His exquisite Form, from

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the lotus feet upwards, right up to His crown. It is only the Victor that wears the crown and by mentioning the grandeur of His crown, the Gopis mean to acknowledge Him as the Victor, in their erstwhile squabble. Even as He created the worlds, with all their contents, from the melting pot to which they had been consigned earlier, He has infused fresh life into the Gopīs who had earlier been the victims of devastating feminine jealousy. For Him, who as Paraśurāma, destroyed the haughty Kṣatriya kings, extending over twentyone generations, is it at all much of a job to get the better of the frail Gopīs? Of course, the Gopīs know, that rejoining their Lord now doesn't mean perpetual enjoyment of His company and they are in for further spells of misery, due to separation from Him. Even so, they are prepared to brave it and get back to Him at least for the time-being.

āycci ākiya aṉṉaiyāl aṉṟu veṉṉey vārttaiyuḷ cīṟṟa muṇṭu aḻu
kūtta appaṉ-taṉṉai, kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
ēttiya tamiḻ-mālai āyirattuḷ ivaiyum ōr pattu icai yoṭum
nāttaṉṉāl navila uraippārkku illai nalkuravē. (VI–2–11)

Translation

Those that chant tunefully these songs ten
Out of the thousand Tamil songs of Caṭakōpaṉ
Of Kurukūr, adoring the Lord, Who (as child Kṛṣṇa) cried bitter
When someone complained, in general, about the theft of butter,
Unto His mother, will never from poverty (of God-love) suffer.

Notes

(i) Here is a splendid reference to one of the many infant sports of the Lord. The shepherdesses of Bṛndāvaṉ complained to Yaśodha that all their butter had been stolen by some one. Just on hearing this g neral complaint without any mention about Him in particular, child Kṛṣṇa cried immediately, as if to plead that He was not the culprit. Thus, by His own unbidden cry, He betrayed Himself as the urchin thief. An interesting

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parallel for this is cited in Īṭu commentary. One day, the residents of a mutt (Monastery) asked among themselves as to who should clean and water the monastery and it was decided that the unlearned (uninitiated in the Vedas) among them should be detailed for such menial service. One among them immediately cried (although nobody had spotted him out, as the unlearned): "Sirs, how can I clean such a big place as this?" Poor fellow, he betrayed himself by this spontaneous cry, unnamed and unsought.

(ii) The Lord's grief, at His repulsion by the Gopīs, shutting the door against Him, was just as poignant as when He was tied to the pounder by His mother, as a punishment for stealing butter.

Sixth Centum—Third Decad (VI-3) (Nalkuravum, Celvum)

Preamble

In VI-1, the Saint sent messages to Lord Rāma at Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr but He responded, rather late. This made the Nāyakī furious and she enacted, in the preceding decad, all that tussle, which ensued between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs. Ultimately, the Lord proved victorious, as seen in VI-2-10, and the reunion between Him and the Saint materialised. The Saint now keeps musing over the superior might of the Lord, in having weaned him round, despite his stout resolve not to have anything to do with that malingering defaulter any more. The Lord reveals to the Āḻvār His extraordinary capacity for achieving the impossible besides the glorious Iconic Form in which He stays in Tiruviṇṇakar (In Tamilnadu, near Tirukkutantai, covered by V-8). The Āḻvār recounts this experience, in the current decad.

nalkuravum, celvum, narakum, cuvarkkamum āy,
velpakaiyum, naṭpum, viṭamum, amutamum āy,
palvakaiyum paranta perumāṉ, eṉṉai āḻvāṉai,
celvam malku kuṭit tiruviṇṇakark kaṇṭēṉē. (VI–3–1)

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Translation

Seen have I in Tiruviṇṇakar, with riches filled,
My Liege-Lord, Who does encompass in His universe vast,
Pelf and penury, hell and Svarga, love and hatred,
Poison and nectar and many such opposites.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār says that he has seen in Tiruviṇṇakar, the the Lord who composes within Himself all the incompatibles. It is He who kept kucela poor initially, then made him rich and again pushed him into penury. It is He that puts some people in the luxurious and delightful S arga and consigns some others to the dismal hell; He engenders in us hatred as well as love for Him, the one who hates Him is made to love Him and vice versa. For example, the inveterate Kaṇṭākarṇa became friendly to the Lord whereas Śīmālika who was an intimate friend of His, got his head severed by the Lord's discus. It is the Lord who gave Śiva poison and nectar to the Devās; He is like poison unto some and like nectar unto others. Actually, those that look upon everything as forming part of the Lord's immense possessions, vast and varied, will acquire perfect mental equanimity, making no distinction between these opposite pairs, neither elated by the one nor depressed by the other.

(ii) The Lord, enshrined in this pilgrim centre (Tiruviṇṇakar), is called by the Āḻvār as 'Oppili Appaṉ', the peerless Sire, vide the ninth-song, while the Purāṇik tradition carries the Lord's name as "*Uppili Appaṉ*", *salt-free* dishes being offered to Him during the diurnal worship.

kaṇṭa iṉpam tuṉpaṁ, kalakkaṅkaḻum tēṟṟamum āy,
taṇṭamum taṇmaiyum, taḻalum niḻalum āy,
kaṇṭukōṭaṟku ariya perumāṉ, eṉṉai āḻvāṉ ūr
teṉ tiraip puṉal cūḻ tiruviṇṇakar nal nakarē. (VI–3–2)

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Translation

Tiruviṇṇakar, the lovely city the limpid waters surround
Is where my Lord stays, whose possessions vast none can comprehend;
He is at once pleasure and pain, one sees around,
Clarity and confusion, fury and favour, blistering heat and cool shade.

Note

This is just a follow-up of the theme mooted in the preceding song, the blending in Him of the opposites. Sensual pleasures, hankered after by many, are studiously eschewed by those blessed by Him, as a serious impediment in the way of attaining Him. Again, there are the book-worms, who despite their immense reading do not have clear ideas, suffering as they do from lack of proper assimilation and the Lord's grace which helps such assimilation. The unlettered score easily over the so-called scholars and, by the grace of their Preceptors, enjoy absolute clarity of thought and understanding. This has already been illustrated in the notes under I-9-6. In respect of the impious and ungodly (Asuras), the Lord is fast and furious and is in no mood to forgive them, while, at the same time, He swears by His devotees, that they are above mistakes and even if they commit mistakes, according to others, He takes them all in good light, saying that they have done well. The climate, with its components of heat and cold, is also controlled by the Lord. Look at the Saints who see heat in cold when the Lord does not commune with them and cold in heat when in His company. In fact, there is nothing in the Lord's Universe, which is not worthy of love, so far as Saints are concerned, in view of their universal outlook, making them see God everywhere. Two devotees, by name, Cēṇāpati tācar and Nallār travelled together to the Holy hill of Tirupati. On the way, Tācar beat the bushes with a stick to clear the way. This brought forth a sharp rebuke from Nallār who asked: "Comrade, why do you punish God's bush which has not stood in the way of your desires' (wealth and lust)?"

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nakaramum nāṭukaḷum, ñāṇamum mūṭamum āy,
nikar il cūḻ cuṭar āy, iruḷ āy, nilaṇ āy, vicumpu āy,
cikara māṭaṅkaḷ cūḻ tiruviṇṇakar cērnta pirāṇ
pukar koḷ kīrtti allāl, illai-yāvarkkum puṇṇiyamē. (VI–3–3)

Translation

For one and all, salvation lies only in the glowing grace
Of the Lord in Tiruviṇṇakar, with its towering mansions,
Who is at once hall and hamlet, intelligence and ignorance.
The sky and Earth, pitched darkness and peerless brilliance.

Note

There are some, enjoying the luxuries of life in big cities with extra amenities while there are others, toiling hard and eking out a miserable existence in the villages with no amenities whatsoever. Well, these are all controlled and regulated by the Lord. The correct perception of things, with due intelligence as well as misconception resulting from ignorance, light and darkness, the concrete Earth and the nebulous Sky, all these are directed by the Lord who resides in Tiruviṇṇakar, in His 'Arcā' (iconic) Form, wherein converge all His excellences in a perfect measure. It is here, in this land of darkness and nescience, that His auspicious qualities shine all the more, unlike the Heaven where it is just like a lamp burning in broad day-light.

puṇṇiyam pāvam, puṇarcci pirivu eṉṟu ivai āy,
eṇṇam āy, maṟappu āy, uṇmai āy, iṉmai āy, allaṇ āy,
tiṇṇa māṭaṅkaḷ cūḻ tiruviṇṇakar cērnta pirāṇ,
kaṇṇaṇ iṉ aruḷē kaṇṭukoḷmiṉkaḷ-kaitavamē? (VI–3–4)

Translation

Know, Ye, 'tis all the sweet, spontaneous grace of Kaṇṇaṇ, enshrined
In Tiruviṇṇakar, with its solid mansions, Who in Him combines
Merit and demerit, solidarity and segregation,

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Remembrance and forgetfulness, truth and falsehood and yet remains
To all these unattached; should this solid truth are one-question?

Notes

(i) 'Puṇya', giving rise to happiness and 'Pāpa' leading to misery, the corresponding pleasure of enjoying the coveted things and pain of privation from them, are directed and regulated by the Supreme Lord.

(ii) Again, remembrance and forgetfulness, the truth revealing His existence and the falsehood denying it, are also controlled by him, as the Internal Controller of one and all and yet, He remains unattached to either of these opposites. This is the supreme truth and its veracity hardly needs questioning.

kaitavam cemmai, karumai veḻumaiyum āy,
mey poy, iḻamai mutumai, putumai paḻamaiyum āy,
ceyta tiṇ matiḷ cūḻ tiruviṇṇakar cērnta pirāṉ
peyta kāvu kaṇṭir-perum tēvu uṭai mūvulakē. (VI–3–5)

Translation

The triple worlds where reside the exalted Devas (Brahmā and others)
Are but the orchards raised by the benevolent Lord in Tiruviṇṇakar,
With its ramparts, robust and lovely, who directs
Truth and falsehood, the sneaky and the erect,
The young and the old, old and new, black and white.

Notes

(i) From Brahmā down to the smallest insect, all are His wards, without distinction of high and low. Some are forthright and straightforward while there are others who are nothing but crooked and who can never be erect in word, deed or thought. Well, all these are controlled by the Supreme Lord who also combines in Himself these contrary traits. For instance, as Kṛṣṇa,

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the cowherd boy, He would search for His missing calf inside the butter pots while, as Śrī Rāma, He wouldn't mind speaking out the bare truth even to a demoness like Sūrpanakhā who met Him at Pañcavaṭi and enquired about Him.

(ii) *Black and white*: The Lord incarnated as Balarāma, of white Complexion and as Kṛṣṇa, of black complexion. When they moved, side by side, it looked as if a black mountain followed a white mountain.

(ii') *Truth and falsehood*: As Śrī Rāma, the Lord was the great apostle of truth while, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He was a bundle of apparent contradictions, truthful unto the devout and the opposite of it to the otherwise.

(iv) *The young and the old*: The ageless Lord incarnated as a Babe, still retaining His stature as the Primate, the oldest of all (Purāṇa Puruṣa).

(v) *Old and New*: Ageless and hence old He, no doubt, is but, all the same, He retains the youthful freshness, exhilarating beyond measure.

mūvulakaṅkaḷum āy, allaṉ āy, ukappu āy, muṉivu āy,
pūvil vāḷ makaḷ āy, tavvai āy, pukaḷ āy, paḻi āy,
tēvar mēvit toḻum tiruviṇṇakar ceṛnta pirāṉ
pāviyēṉ maṉattē uṟaikiṉṟa parañcuṭarē. (VI–3–6)

Translation

The resplendent Lord Supreme Who, in this sinner's mind resides
And in Him combines the eternal Heaven and the ephemeral worlds,
Likes and dislikes, the Goddess of affluence and her number opposite;
Fame and opprobrium, stays in Tiruviṇṇakar, the Celestials' resort favourite.

Notes

(i) The three worlds, with their strange admixture of Satva, Rajas and Tamas, with their inhabitants, bound down

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by their actions, past and present, liable to dissolution, as well as the Eternal Land (Heaven) in contra-distinction to the Sportive Universe, referred to above, are controlled by the Supreme Lord.

(ii) A thing, liked by some, is disliked by some others; the same person might like a thing at one time and dislike it at another. Some are affuent, being the recipients of Lakṣmi's grace, while others are oppressed by chill penury, due to the lack of such grace. Some are praise worthy while there are others who are condemned as despicable. All these are controlled by the Lord; while He is extolled by the devout, He is condemned by the demoniac.

(iii) The Saint calls himself a sinner, recollecting how, in the earlier decad, he had the cheek, the impudence to shut the door against the Lord, when He presented Himself.

param cuṭar uṭampu āy, aḻukkup patitta uṭampu āy,
karantum tōṉṟiyum, niṉṟum, kaitavaṅkaḷ ceytum, viṇṇōr
ciṟaṅkaḷāl vaṇaṅkum tiruviṇṇakar cērnta pirāṉ
varam koḷ pātam allāl, illai-yāvarkkum vaṉ caraṇē. (VI–3–7)

Translation

Refuge, safe and sound, for each and every one,
There's naught but the glorious feet of the puzzling Lord,
Who's both the mundane and the ultra-mundane, hidden and open,
And stays in Tiruviṇṇakar where Devas come and bow their heads.

Notes

The entire Universe is the Lord's body. He also possesses His own unique form (Divya maṅgala vigraha), the aprākṛta (ultra mundane) and *Śuddha Satva* (impeccable purity).

He sustains all things and beings, hidden inside them as their Internal Controller; He also comes out in the open as Śrī Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. He is transparent to the devotees and hidden to the rest. His feet confer all boons and will

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not give up the devotees even if the Lord and His Divine Consort Who is grace personified, do give up (a contingency which will, in the very nature of things, never occur). Hence, the Lord's feet constitute the life refuge for one and all, from the exalted Brahmā down to the meanest creature.

vaṉ caraṇ curarkku āy, acurarkku vem kūrramum āy,
taṉ caraṇ niḻarkīḻ ulakam vaittum, vaiyātum,
teṉ caraṇ ticaikkut tiruviṇṇakar cērnta pirāṉ
eṉ caraṇ eṉ kaṇṇaṉ, eṉṉai āḷuṭai eṉ appaṉē. (VI–3–8)

Translation

In Tiruviṇṇakar, the Refuge of the southerly direction, stays
Kaṇṇaṉ, my Liege-Lord, my sole Refuge, the Devas haven safe,
The deadly opponent of the Asuras, Who caresses under His feet
And shelters the devout and leaves others in scorching heat.

Notes

(i) The Lord is known to be absolutely impartial and yet, whenever the Devas are tormented by the Asuras, the former seek refuge in Him and He engages Himself in a pitched battle against the Asuras and vanquishes them. There is, however, no inconsistency, if looked at in the manner indicated below.

(ii) In the tanks dug by charitable men, one man allays his thirst, while another drowns himself of death. The lamp is there to shed light during nights and make our movements easy. But then, the winged ants rush in and die. The Lord, by Himself, is not overzealous in protecting the Devas or hell-bent to put down the Asuras but none can help the latter category if they court destruction, as in the instances cited here.

(iii) Unto those, who seek Him as the Sole Refuge, He grants cool shelter and makes them forgot all their erstwhile miseries. On the other hand, those who stray away from Him and run after the sensual pleasures, like unto trying to quench one's thirst by swallowing

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the blazing flame or reposing under the shade cast by the swinging hood of the Cobra, are left severely alone. to wither away.

eṉ appaṉ eṉakku āy, ikuḷ āy, eṉṉaip peṟṟavaḷ āy,
poṉ appaṉ, maṇi appaṉ, muttu appaṉ, eṉ appaṉum āy,
miṉṉap poṉ matiḷ cūḻ tiruviṇṇakar cēroṭa appaṉ,
taṉ oppār il appaṉ, tantaṉaṉ-taṉa tāḷ niḻalē. (VI–3–9)

Translation

The peerless Lord Who unto me is Father, Mate and Mother,
All combined, my Sire, like gold, ruby and pearl put together,
Stays in Tiruviṇṇakar with its golden ramparts all around,
Me. He has under the cool shade of His feet grounded.

Notes

(i) The great Sages have proclaimed: " Vāsudeva tharucchāyā nāthi śithā na gharmadhā....," that is, the shade of Vāsudeva, the gigantic tree, is most soothing and refreshing, it prevents entry into hell and is, therefore, worth getting into. Such a shade has been granted to Saint Nammāḻvār by the Lord of His own accord in His spontaneous Grace. This great benefaction of the Lord is being extolled by the Saint in this song. By the shade of the Lord is actually meant service unto Him in His immediate presence.

(ii) In the world around, the Father is distinct from the Mother and the Mother is distinct from the Mate. The combination of all these different functionaries in one and the same person, is not possible except in God Who is unique in all respects. So also, Gold serves a certain purpose, the ruby serves yet another purpose and the pearl, a third, but one can secure all these benefits from the Lord alone, who is 'All in one'.

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niḻal veyyil, ciṟumai perumai, kuṟumai neṭumaiyum āy,
cuḻalvaṉa niṟaṉa, maṟṟum āy, avai allaṉum āy,
maḻalaḷi vāy vaṇṭu vāḻ tiruviṇṇakar maṉṉu pirāṉ
kaḻalkaḷ aṉṟi, maṟṟōr kaḻaikaṇ ilam; kāṇmiṉkaḷē. (VI–3–10)

Translation

Take it on oath, Saviour we have none but the feet
Of the Lord, who resides in Tiruviṇṇakar where go gay
The lisping bees, Who is at once, short and tall, shade and heat,
Things still and mobile and all else but to them attached. in no way.

Notes

In every centum of this great work, there is a decad which is addressed by the Saint to the world at large, wherein he preaches the Supremacy of God, His amazing simplicity etc. So then, this is the crucial decad in this centum, conveying the golden message to the people that the feet of the Lord, enshrined in Tiruviṇṇakar constitute our sole Refuge.

The Lord is said to combine in Him all these contraries, the cool shade and the scorching heat, the smallest and the biggest, still, mobile and what not, as the entire universe, the created worlds with their vast varieties, constitutes His body and yet, He will not partake of these qualities.

kāṇmiṉkaḷ, ulakīr! eṉṟu kaṇmukappē nimiṉṯa
tāḻ-iṇaiyaṉ-ṉaṉṉaik kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ coṉṉa
āṇai āyirattut tiruviṇṇakarp pattum vallār
kōṇai iṉṟi, viṇṇōrkku eṉṟum āvar kuravarkaḷē. (VI-3–11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten, out of the thousand,
Composed by Caṭakōpaṉ of Kurukūr, at the Lord's command,
Pointing to the worldlings, right in front, the Lord's towering feet,
Will for unreserved admiration by the Celestials become fit

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Notes

(i) The Dramiḍa (Tamil) Vedas, like the Sanskrit Vedas convey the Lord's command-' Śrutis Smṛtir mamai-vājñā.'

(ii) Those that are well-versed in these ten songs will compel the unreserved admiration of the ' Nitya Sūrīs ' (the Ever-free Angels) in Heaven and command their respect, that even these people, dwelling in the dark land of nescience, are enjoying the Lord so well.

Sixth Centum—Fourth Decad (VI-4)
(Kuravai āycciyarōṭu)

Preamble

In the last decad of the last centum, the Āḻvār wished to sustain himself by contemplating the Lord's wondrous deeds during His Avatāras but literally broke down, overwhelmed by emotion. It was with deep sorrow, born of frustration, he then gave vent to his inability to steady himself and recount the Lord's deeds, mighty and miraculous. But the picture which has now emerged, is vastly different, the erstwhile emotional break-down and exhaustion yielding place to exhilaration. In every song, the first two lines, (as in the original text), recount the Lord's glorious deeds and activities while the next two lines bespeak the Āḻvār's extraordinary joy, resulting from such recital *cum* contemplation. In dire contrast to the appalling sense of worthlessness, betrayed by him quite often in the earlier songs, the Āḻvār now concludes each song by showering on himself praises like, ' there is none equal to me in all the land ", " there is none above me " etc. These do not, however, smack of bravado or hauteur, being the expressions of an ecstatic mind dissolved in God-love, by-no-means comparable to the utterances of those who are in their normal senses, dominated by egoistic compulsions.

In this decad, the Āḻvār confines himself exclusively to Kṛṣṇāvatāra. Stray references, here and there, to other Avatāras, such as the Lord spanning all the worlds as Tṛvikram`, have also an ultimate bearing on Kṛṣṇāvatāra only. c.f. Periyāḻvār Tirumoḻi

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where Queen Yaśodhā beckons Baby Kṛṣṇa as "Come, Come, oh, Vāmaṉa Nampī! Come, my darling!"

kuravai āyccciyarōṭu kōttatum, kuṉṟam oṉṟu ēnti yatum,
uravu nīrp poykai nākam kāyntatum uṭpaṭa, maṟṟum pala
aravil-paḷḷip pirāṉ-taṉ māya viṉaikaḷaiyē alaṟṟi,
iravum naṉ pakalum tavirkilan-eṉṉa kuṟai eṉakkē? (VI–4–1)

Translation

Could there be any want for us, who dote, night and day,
On the many exploits, mighty and marvellous, of the great Benefactor,
Our Lord, resting on serpent-bed, His dancing with Gopīs, going gay,
Lifting up Mount Govardhana and trouncing the serpent in deep waters?

Note

The Lord, who was reposing on His serpent-bed in the Milky-ocean, gave up His bed and came down to Mathurā (Uttar Pradesh). Recountingt he many deeds of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Who thus came down from the Milk-ocean to Mathurā, the Āḻvār begins with the famous 'Rāsa Krīḍā' where Kṛṣṇa assumes many forms and holds the hand of each of the half a million Gopīs, moving in a circle. It is but appropriate that the Āḻvār begins with this event, as he feels that his reunion with the Lord, after all that squabble in VI-2, is like the 'Rāsa Krīḍā'. On His part, the Lord, feels that His union with the Āḻvār gives Him the same amount of pleasure as He had, when in the company of that vast multitude of Gopīs during that classic dance. And then, the said dance revealed the amazing simplicity of the Lord. Such simplicity can, however, be appreciated in its true light only when it emanates from one who enjoys paramountcy (paratva) as well. Therefore it is, that the Āḻvār recounts the lifting of Mount Govardhana, betokening Śrī Kṛṣṇa's supremacy, immediately after 'Rāsa Krīḍā'.

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kēyat tim kuḻal ūtiṟṟum, nirai mēyttatum, keṇṭai oṇ kaṇ,
vācap pūṅ kuḻal piṉṉai tōḷkaḷ maṇantatum, maṟṟum pala
māyak kōlap pirāṉ-taṉ ceykai niṉaintu, maṇam kuḻaintu,
nēyattōṭu kaḻinta pōtu -eṉakku ev ulakam nikarē? (VI–4–2)

Translation

Equal unto me, is there a world, as I go into raptures
Over the wondrous Lord, playing the flute sweet, leading cows to pasture,
Getting locked in sweet embrace of fish-eyed Piṉṉai, whose locks
Are with fragrant flowers bedecked and myriads of such miracles?

Notes

(i) A whole decad has been devoted by Periyāḻvār to a thrilling description of the enthralling strains from Lord Kṛṣṇā's flute. Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar has epitomised all that, in just one Śloka of the second centum of his 'Śrī Raṅgarāja Stavaṁ', where the author goes to the extent of saying that Śrī Kṛṣṇa felt entranced by His own music.

(ii) Oh, what a wonder of wonders! The Lord in Heaven, unfolding an unending stream of bliss unto the 'Nityās' and Muktās', comes down to Earth, taking birth in the shepherd community, known for its low intelligence, and becomes one of them, tending the cows and calves with great delight, excelling even His desire to stay in Heaven. It is said that, even after His return to the Celestium, He fondly recollected this particular activity of His, during His Avatāra as Kṛṣṇa, and sometimes even uttered the sounds, "ḍriyō! ḍriyō!", fancying that He was following the flock of cows and calves, tending them. Musing over Lord Kṛṣṇa's wondrous deeds on Earth, the Saint feels that this unique enjoyment of his cannot be had even in the high Heaven where the Lord's transcendent glory is far more pronounced, throwing into shade His other aspect of 'Sauḻabhya' (easy accessibility).

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nikar il mallaraic cerratum, nirai mēyttatum, nīḷ neṭum kaic
cikara mā kaḷiṟu aṭṭatum, ivai pōlvaṇavum, piṟavum
pukar koḷ cōtip pirāṉ-taṉ ceykai niṇaintu, pulampi, eṉṟum
nukara, vaikal vaikapperṟēṉ-eṉakku eṉ iṉi nōvatuvē?
(VI–4–3)

Translation

Could there be any affliction for me, who time does eke
With mind and tongue steeped in the deeds miraculous
Of (Kṛṣṇa), the radiant Lord, His killing the wrestlers peerless,
Tending the cows and slaying the elephant, tall and huge, with
long trunk?

Notes

(i) Śrī Kṛṣṇa had to encounter hostile wrestlers on two different occasions. The first was when Akrūra escorted Him and Balarāma to Kamsa's court, all the way from Vrindāvan. Right at the entrance to the palace was stationed a frenzied elephant of formidable size, in must, so as to pull down the Divine Brothers and trample them to death. But Kṛṣṇa pulled out the tusk and slew the animal with it, effortlessly. After overcoming this initial hurdle, they advanced towards the palace, only to be confronted, very soon, by two heavy-weight wrestlers, Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika, of enormous proportions. These were also vanquished, in no time, by Kṛṣṇa, the divine lad.

The next occasion, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa had to face wrestlers, was in Duryodhana's palace. The Lord went to Duryodhana's court, as a messenger from the Pāṇḍavas but the evil-minded Duryodhana had put up a nicely decorated throne for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, on a fake dais, with a false floor. As soon as Kṛṣṇa took His seat, the flimsy floor gave way and He went deep into the hollow beneath, where remained hidden a band of wrestlers, ready to pounce upon Him. Assuming a gigantic form (Viśva Rūpa), He quelled them all, with perfect ease.

(ii) The radiance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, referred to, in this song, is the one, contemporaneously enjoyed and given

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expression to, by the fortunate damsels in Mathurā city, who beheld the special glow on the Lord's face after He vanquished the huge elephant and the mighty wrestlers.

nōva, āycci uralōṭu ārkka iraṅkiṟṟum, vañcap peṇṇaic
cāvap pāl uṇṭatum, ūr cakaṭam iṟac cāṭiyatum,
tēvak kōlap pirāṉ-taṉ ceykai niṉaintu, maṉam kuḻaintu,
mēvak kālaṅkaḷ kūṭiṉēṉ-eṉakku eṉ iṉi vēṇṭuvatē? (VI–4–4)

Translation

Contemplate do I, with all my heart, all the time,
The wondrous deeds of the Lord of ultra-mundane Form,
The pain on His person, when tied to a pounder by His mother,
His sucking to death the breast of (Pūtanā), the Imposter,
His kicking to pieces the demon in the cart-wheel and many others;
Is there indeed a thing I need, any further?

Note

Naṅcīyar used to observe, with great feeling, while chanting this song: " Look at the telling manner in which this song has been worded by the Saint. The pain on the person of child Kṛṣṇa, when He was tied to the pounder by Yaśodhā, is now felt by the Āḻvār as if it were inflicted on him. Oh, what an engrossment!"

vēṇṭit tēvar irakka vantu piṟantatum, vīṅku iruḷvāy,
pūṇṭu aṟu aṉṉai pulampa, pōy aṅku ōr āykkulam pukkatum,
kāṇṭal iṉṟi vaḷarntu, kañcaṉait tuñca vañcam ceytatum,
īṇṭu nāṉ alaṟṟapeṟṟēṉ-eṉakku eṉṉa ikal uḷatē? (VI–4–5)

Translation

Full—throated do I recount, right here, the deeds golden,
Of my Lord Who incarnated (as Kṛṣṇa) at Devas' request,
And to set at naught the mother's fears did retreat,
Under cover of night, into the shepherd clan and hidden

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From enemies grew, outwitted Kañcaṉ and him did slay;
Is there for me any want that needs to be allayed?

Notes

(i) The Lord's incarnation is ostensibly at the request of the Devas but intrinsically to fulfil His own urge to mingle freely with the devout, over here, and feed them with His exquisite charm and exhilarating traits—the 'Sādhu paritrāṇāṁ' (Sustenance of the devout), in its true sense.

(ii) King Kamsa, simulating affection for Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, his nephews, invited them to attend the festival of archery so that they could be vanquished by the one or the other agency, set up by him for the purpose and then openly bemoan their loss, to avoid public suspicion. But, alas! he was outwitted by the Omniscient Kṛṣṇa, who was well aware of Kamsa's nefarious designs on Him, and put an end to him and his evil intentions.

(iii) Having lost all the earlier babes, right at emergence from her womb, Devaki caught hold of the Divine Babe's feet and begged of Him, both, out of maternal love and fear of the tyrant of a brother (Kamsa), to retreat elsewhere and remain safe.

ikal koḷ puḷḷaip piḷantatum, imil ēṟukaḷ ceṟṟatuvum,
uyar koḷ cōlaik kuruntu ocittatum uṭpaṭa, maṟṟum pala
akal koḷ vaiyam aḷanta māyaṉ, eṉ appaṉ-taṉ māyaṅkaḷē
pakal irāp paravap peṟṟēṉ-eṉakku eṉṉa maṉap parippē?
(VI–4–6)

Translation

Blest am I to laud, day and night, the wo[illegible] deeds
Of my mysterious Lord Who spanned a[illegible] worlds,
Tore into twain the beak of the demonia[illegible]ird, controlled
The unruly bulls and slew, 'tween the [illegible] trees rolled

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And pulled them down, these and many more wonders;
Could there for me be mental affliction any longer?

Note

A demon, set upon child Kṛṣṇa by Kamsa, stood on the bank of the river Yamuna, in the form of a gigantic stork and swallowed the Divine Child Who, however, blistered the stomach of the bird. Unable to bear the torture inside, the devil spat the child out and was about to peck at Him with its beak, when the latter took time by the forelock and split the bird's beak into two and killed it. In his 'Yādavābhyudhayam', Śri Vedānta Deśika says that the bird was of formidable proportions, looking like a winged Kailās mountin, creeping slowly and that, after it was slain, its plumes were tied up, here and there, by the shepherd boys, as a warning signal for evil-doers, with sinister designs on the Divine child.

maṉap parippōṭu aḻukku māṇiṭa cātiyil tāṉ piṟantu,
taṉakku vēṇṭu urukkoṇṭu, tāṉ taṉa cīṟṟattiṉai muṭikkum
puṉat tuḻāy muṭi mālai mārpaṉ, eṉ appaṉ-taṉ māyaṅkaḷē
niṉaikkum neñcu uṭaiyēṉ-eṉakku iṉi yār nikar nīḷ nilattē?
(VI–4–7)

Translation

Is there any one, a match unto me, in this huge world,
Possessing as I do, a mind wholly absorbed in the wondrous deeds
Of my Sire, wearing tuḷasi garland fresh, on His crown
And winsome chest, the radiant Lord assuming Forms of His own
And coming into the midst of the dirty humans,
Just to give vent to His fury and quell ungodly demons?

Notes

(i) The last line conveys the cream of this song. The benevolent Lord gets terribly furious when His devotees are offended against; if He came down and took birth among the humans, with all their dirt and squalor and engaged Himself in a duel with Hiraṇya and Rāvaṇa,

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it was because of the terrible affront they had thrown at His devotees. The Lord's anger would not get appeased until He tormented and tortured the offenders, even though He could quell them all, by a mere resolve, without moving His little finger. This is how the illustrious Nañcīyar would interpret the Lord's advent and obviously, he derived his authority from the text of this song. Nampiḷḷai puts it that the mother's anger over those, who tease and torment her child, can subside only when she pours forth her ire on them. In this simile the mother takes the place of the Lord and the child, that of His devotee.

(i) The Tuḷaci garland, cool and fresh, will be worn by the Lord only when His anger subsides after the extermination of the enemies of His devotees.

(iii) For His Avatāras, the Lord assumes the form of His choice, eminently suited for the purpose—" Icchā grahīto abhimatoru dehaḥ ", as the Sages put it and " Sambhavāmi ātmamāyayā ", as the Lord Himself has stated in Bhagavad Gita (IV–6). The word 'ātmamāyayā' means 'ātmecchayā', (as He likes).

nīl nilattoṭu, Vāṉ viyappa, niṟai perum pōrkaḷ ceytu,
vāṇaṉ āyiram tōḷ tuṇittatum uṭpaṭa, maṟṟum pala-
māṇi āy, nilam koṇṭa-māyaṉ eṉ appaṉ-taṉ māyaṅkaḷē
kāṇum neñcu uṭaiyēṉ-eṉakku iṉi eṉṉa kalakkam uṇṭē?
(VI–4–8)

Translation

Blest with a mind that can envision my wondrous Lord
Who, as Vāmana, got as a gift (from Bali) the whole world
And (as Kṛṣṇa) waged the battle big, the denizens admired
Both in Heaven and Earth and Vāṇaṉ's thousand arms severed,
How can I from mental agitation suffer any longer?

Note

Bāṇāsura was a descendent of Mahā Bali from whom Lord Vāmana Mūrti managed to get the entire land, as gift. The furious battle waged by Lord Kṛṣṇa against Bāṇāsura and

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how, in the end, he was let off with a bare four arms, out of the thousand he had, at the special intervention and request of Rudra, have been set out already, in great detail, in the notes below III-10-4.

kalakka ēḷ kaṭal, ēḷ malai, ulaku ēḻum, kaḻiyak kaṭāy,
ulakkat tērkoṭu ceṉṟa māyamum uṭpaṭa maṟṟum pala,
valakkai āḻi, iṭakkaic caṅkam ivai uṭai mālvaṇṇaṉai,
malakkum nā uṭaiyēṟku māṟu uḷatō-im maṇṇiṉ micaiyē?
(VI–4–9)

Translation

By my tongue (love-inspired) I captivate the cloud-hued Lord
Who the discus wields in right hand and the conch in His left,
Who (as Kṛṣṇa) drove to the regions afar, in a chariot deft,
Across the seas seven, the mountains seven and the seven worlds
And many such wonders did perform; equal unto me
Could there, in all the land, any one be?

Notes

(i) The episode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa going in a chariot, along with a Brahmin and Arjuna, to the ultra-mundane region and restoring to the Brahmin, his missing children, reclaimed from Heaven, has been set forth, in detail, in the notes below III-10-5.

(ii) Saint Nammāḻvār is also known as Parāṅkuśa, the goad weaning round his spiritual antagonists through his scintillating hymns and making the Lord Himself pliable, enraptured by these sweet, love-laden hymns. The significance of this name has well been brought out, in this song. The discus and conch in the Lord's hands typify 'Time' and 'space' or 'infinity' and 'immensity', respectively. As Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar elucidated, while discoursing on this song, it is indeed impossible to enclose and entrap a God of this nature, but the prodigality of a Saint's love does exceed these limits and encompasses even the Infinite. Verily, a God of 'Space' and 'Time' is like a wayward Elephant, roaming at liberty, unrestrained and even such an

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Elephant, Saint Nammāḻvār, rather Parāṅkuśa, in this context, claims to curb and restrain. That is why he is significantly referring to the cloud-hued Lord along with His attributes, namely, 'Discus' and 'Conch'.

maṉmicaip perum pāram nīṅku, ōr pārata mā perum pōr
paṇṇi, māyaṅkaḷ ceytu, cēṉaiyaip pāḻpaṭa nūṟṟiṭṭup pōy,
viṉmicait taṉa tāmamē puka mēviya cōti-taṉ tāḷ
naṇṇi, nāṉ vaṇaṅkapperṟēṉ-eṉakku ār piṟar nāyakarē?
(VI–4–10)

Translation

There's none to order me about, blest that I am to approach
And adore the feet of my resplendent Lord Who rid the Earth
Of its unwholesome burden, thro' the great war of Mahā-Bhāratha
And its wondrous strategy, with the resolve firm to rout
The armies, one and all, and did later His Celestium reach.

Note

The inhabitants of the Earth having turned out to be unholy and selfish pleasure-seekers, Mother Earth couldn't carry the unwholesome burden. Lord Kṛṣṇa is said to have incarnated, to rid the Earth of this unwholesome burden and the great War of Mahābhārata came in handy for this purpose, the number of survivors on both sides being so sparse that they could easily be counted on one's finger tips. Lord Kṛṣṇa controlled the military strategy, unique in several respects, at every turn and led the Pāṇḍavas to a formal victory. After His hectic deeds, down below, Śrī Kṛṣṇa went back to the Celestium. The Āḻvār exults with chuckling pride, in this song, that he could enjoy the manner of the Lord's descent into this dismal abode of dirt and devilry and His safe return to the Celestium, at the end of His breath-taking activities over here. It is said that, at the happy conclusion of the ten-day festival (Brahmotsava) of Lord Raṅganātha, in Śrīraṅgam, two Savants, by name, Mutaliyāṇṭāṉ and Empār, prostrated before each other and got locked up, in an embrace, in grateful acknowledgement of the safe conclusion of the festival of the Lord, of an

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extremely delicate Form and that too, in the midst of crores of persons, selfish and egoistic. Naṅcīyar, who happened to watch the said rapport between those two God-lovers, passed on the information to others and it has thus been handed down to posterity.

nāyakaṉ muḻu ēḻ ulākukkum āy, muḻu ēḻ ulakum taṉ
vāyakam puka vaittu, umiḻntu, avai āy, avai allaṉum ām
kēcavaṉ aṭi, iṇaimicaik kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ coṉṉa
tūya āyirattu ip pattāl pattar āvar tuvaḻ iṉṟiyē. (VI–4–11)

Translation

Those that learn these songs ten, out of the immaculate thousand
Composed by Caṭakōpaṉ of Kurukūr, adoring the lovely pair of feet
Of Kēcavaṉ, the Lord Supreme of the entire Universe Who sustained
All the worlds in His stomach and then spat them out,
Who pervades them all and would all the same
From them remain apart, will blemishless devotees become.

Notes

(i) *Blemishless devotees*: Those that learn these songs will be exclusively devoted to Lord Kṛṣṇa, like Saint Nammāḻvār. It is this exclusive devotion like unto that of Toṇṭaraṭippoṭi Āḻvār for the holy Śrīraṅgam, that the word 'blemishless' connotes.

(ii) *The immaculate thousand*: Contrary to his prefatory resolve to write out Śrī Rāma's life story, Śrī Vālmīki introduced quite a few extraneous anecdotes, such as the genesis of Gangā, birth of Kārthikeya and so on. Likewise, Sage Vyāsa made no secret of his intention to tell the story of Lord Nārāyaṇa but got terribly discursive and literally turned his Mahābhārata into a war-memoir, with a bewildering maze of episodes, inter-twined and inter-locked. On the other hand, true to his resolve in 'Tiruviruttam', the first of his four works, that he would sing the praise of 'Tirumāl'

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(Mahā Viṣṇu) and nothing but that, *Nammāḻvār kept up the tempo throughout, uninterrupted by anything else* and thus his works became the cream of the whole compendium of 'Divya Prabhandham', even as 'Puruṣa Sūktaṁ' gets the pride of place among the Vedas, 'Manu Smṛti', among the Dharma Śastras, 'Bhagavad Gītā' in Mahābhārata and 'Viṣṇu Purāṇa', among the Purāṇas. Thus 'Tiruvāymoḻi' is *pure and unalloyed.*

Sixth Centum—Fifth Decad (VI-5)
(Tuvaḷ il mā maṇi māṭam)

Preamble

The theme of Nāyakī, Mother and Mate, that is, the Āḻvār expressing himself in the vein of a female lover, her mother and mate, by turns, has already been dealt with, *in extenso*, in the preamble to I-4. Of the hundred decads, comprised in this work, as many as seventeen reflect the 'Nāyaki' aspect, seven are put in the mouth of the Mother and three voiced forth, by the mates. Taking this Sixth Centum alone, VI-1, VI-2 and VI-8 are the utterances of Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki, this one, the song of the mate while VI-6 and VI-7 are ascribed to the Mother. Thus, this centum reflects all the three types, like the fourth centum. As already elucidated, all these songs were, of course, the compositions of the Āḻvār, though ascribed to three different agencies, like unto the waters of the main river being conveyed through different channels. But then, let us now examine the necessity for the songs, in this decad, being put in the mouth of the mate.

In V-6, we saw the Lord's glory and grandeur, enumerated by Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki, possessed by the Lord. And now, the Āḻvār wishes to give expression to the depth of his love unto God. This only redounds to the greatness of the Lord, because all the auspicious qualities of the Lord and His unique prowess will go unheard, unnoticed and unsung but for His devotees who can revel in them and recount, just like the cool southerly breeze blowing in a depopulated place like the forest or the moonshine in the wilderness. Did not Periyāḻvār, in his opening song of benediction,

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pray for long life for himself also, so that he could keep on singing the Lord's praise and praying for His safety? Is not Saint Nammāḷvār the Lord's poet and will not the Āḻvār's greatness be, therefore, but a reflection of the Lord's own? Even so, it would not be quite appropriate for him to sing his own glory, albeit the reflected glory of God. And so, the mates are pressed into service and, in essence, it is the exposition of the Āḻvār's God-love, God-hunger and God-thirst, by some of the devotees. Thus, in this decad, the mates are telling the elderly women around about the profusion of the Āḻvār's love unto the Lord, enshrined in ' Tolai—villimaṅkalam ', a pilgrim centre in the deep South (Tamilnādu) near about Āḻvār Tirunakari (Kurukūr), the birth place of the Āḻvār.

tuvaḷ il mā maṇi māṭam ōṅku tolaivillimaṅkalam toḻum
ivaḷai nīr iṉi, aṉṉaimīr! umakku ācai illai; viṭumiṉō-
tavaḷa oṇcaṅku, cakkaram eṉṟum, tāmarait taṭam kaṇ eṉṟum,
kuvaḷai oṇ malark kaṇkaḷ nīr malka, niṉṟu niṉṟu kumuṟumē.
(VI–5–1)

Translation

Ye, mothers, this lady is unto you lost henceforth,
Better give up all hopes of her, who the Lord does adore
In Tolaivillimaṅkalam where stand tall castles paved with gems flawless,
With a mind that whirls and tears welling in her flowery eyes;
Utter she can't the words she feels the urge to express,
" The Lord's lotus eyes broad and His lovely white conch and discus ".

Note

King Janaka showed the horoscope of baby Sītā to the court astrologers. While predicting her great good fortune of getting married to the Supreme Lord and all that, they also foretold her exile into the forests. So also, when Caṭakōpaṉ was born, his parents elicited from the astrologers that he would be endowed with supreme knowledge and become world-famous and yet, there was the great risk of their losing

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him, if ever they took him to Tolaivillimaṅkalam. The devout parents could not, however, resist the natural urge to take their child to the shrine in the forbidden place, come what may. The high destiny of the God-bound souls and their aim, none and nothing can avert. The resultant position, insofar as Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī is concerned, the prophesy come true, is set out here by her mates. Actually, the mates come into the picture, only when the elderly women seek their aid for finding a way out of the trance-state into which the Nāyakī has worked herself up, on seeing minutely every little bit of the pilgrim centre, the temple and the Deity. Temples and pilgrim centres are not places to hurry through, like a race-horse, but to be paced through leisurely, reverentially beholding the towers and turrets. The buildings loom large in the rapturous eyes of the Nāyakī and look like tall castles, paved with flawless rubies. And then, she beholds the Lord's enthralling Form, His holy weapons and ornaments and gets completely absorbed in admiration of them all. She stands isolated from her folks and finding that she has gone out of hand, the elders seek the good offices of her mates to pull her out of this engrossment. But the mates haven't anything encouraging to say nor is there any point in putting up a bund after all the water has escaped. They do not mince matters either; they admonish the elders for having brought the Nāyakī to this pilgrim centre, knowing full well her susceptibilities. At the same time, the mates throw a very useful hint to the elders, that they would do well to follow in the Nāyakī's foot-steps and get absorbed in the Deity and the surroundings, rather than give her up, as incorrigible. It is indeed a sight for Gods, the ravishing love of the Saint, throbbing with God-love, during those blissful moments of communion with the Lord. The Elders are, therefore, advised by the mates to behold, with admiration, the rapturous state of the Nāyakī whose expression falters, choked with emotion, like unto a cow, whose calf is tethered, away from her, pining for the calf to be fed with the milk welling up her teats and yet, unable to express, by mouth, her painful longing to reach her calf.

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kumuṟum ōcai viḻavu olit tolaivillimaṅkalam koṇṭupukku,
amuta meṉ moḻiyāḷai nīr umakku ācai iṉṟi akaṟṟiṉīr-
tīmir koṇṭāl ottu niṟkum; maṟṟu ivaḷ tēva tēvapirāṉ eṉṟē
nimiyum vāyoṭu, kaṇkaḷ nīr malka, nekku, ocintu, karaiyumē.
(VI–5–2)

Translation

Ye, elders, brought you have to a point of no return,
This lady with a tongue, sweet and soft, having taken
Her to Tolaivillimaṅkalam with its fan-fare of festivals;
Dazed she remains and mention of the name of the Lord universal
Twists her mouth and brings forth tears in abundance
From her eyes and keeps she withering down.

Notes

(i) Even the normal environment of Tolaivillimaṅkalam is enticing enough and what to talk of the festivities, with their rich and varied fares! The elders having brought the God-bent Nāyakī during the festival going on there, they stand no chance whatever of weaning her away from the Lord and the allied attractions. Incidentally, we get at the Śāstraik meaning that we would do well to get initiated into God-head through our elders, rather than the direct approach.

(ii) Could there be a tongue sweeter than that of the Lord's poet, singing the glory of that Insatiable Nectar? For the devout, the Āḻvār provides the nectarean hymns to drink deep from.

(iii) The Nāyakī stands speechless like the profound Brahma Jñāni who scarcely speaks out. In the sixth prapāṭaka of Cāndogyopaniṣad, Svetaketu comes home after undergoing a twelve-year course of instruction (Gurukulavāsa) and finding him tongue-tied, his father instantly perceives that the boy has acquired Brahma Jñāna.

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karai koḷ paim poḻil taṉ paṇait tolaivillimaṅkalam koṇṭupukku,
urai koḷ iṉ moḻiyāḷai nīr uṯakku ācai iṉṟi akaṟṟiṉīr-
tirai koḷ pauvattuc cērntatum, ticai ñālam tāvi alantatum,
niraikaḷ mēyttatumē pitaṟṟi, neṭum kaṇ nīr malka, niṟkumē.
(VI–5–3)

Translation

Ye, mothers, your hold on this sweet-tongued lady is gone,
For you brought her to Tolaivillimaṅkalam with fertile fields and orchards fine,
On the river bank; utter she does how unto the Milky-ocean
The Lord came, how He spanned the sprawling Earth and grazed
The cattle herds and as tears well up her longish eyes, she stands dazed.

Notes

(i) *Sweet tongued*: The Āḻvār's hymns are very sweet to hear and when one delves into their meanings, the commentaries, however numerous and copious they might be, one cannot plumb their depth fully.

(ii) The elders cannot coax the Nāyakī and get her dislodged from this pilgrim centre, even as it would not be possible to induce the fertile fields and the orchards fed by the waters from the river Tāmraparṇi to get uprooted and proceed with them; in other words, the Nāyakī stands as firmly rooted there as the fields and orchards themselves.

niṟkum nālmaṟaivāṇar vāḻ tolaivillimaṅkalam kaṇṭapiṉ,
aṟkam oṉṟum aṟa uṟāḻ-malintāḷ kaṇṭīr ivaḷ-aṉṉaimīr!
kaṟkum kalvi ellām karuṅ kaṭal-vaṇṇaṉ, kaṇṇapirāṉ eṉṟē
oṟkam oṉṟum ilaḷ; ukantu ukantu, uḷ makiḻntu, kuḷaiyumē.
(VI–5–4)

Translation

Ye, elders, this lady has ceased to be modest in the least
After beholding Tolaivillimaṅkalam, the Vedic scholars' seat;
All her talks centre round Kaṇṇapirāṉ, the sea-hued Lord
And with no reserve, she thaws down, overjoyed.

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Note

The Nāyakī was overwhelmed by the sweet chanting of the Vedas in Tolaivillimaṅkalam and she started musing over the Lord Who disseminated the Vedas, at the commencement of the epoch, to the four-headed Brahmā. Her innate modesty is no longer there, in her present rapturous state, and she openly rejoices, speaking solely about the Lord, the ultimate goal of all learning and knowledge.

kuḻaiyum vāḻ-mukattu ēḻaiyait tolaivillimaṅkalam koṇṭupukku,
iḷai koḷ cōtic centāmaraik kaṇ-pirāṉ iruntamai kāṭṭiṉīr;
maḻai peytāl okkum kāṇṇa nīriṉoṭu aṉṟu toṭṭum maiyāntu ivaḷ
nuḻaiyum cintaiyaḷ, aṉṉaimīr! toḻum-āt ticai uṟṟu nōkkiyē. (VI–5–5)

Translation

Ye, mothers, this lady with forehead bright, deeply absorbed
In the Lord's auspicious traits, unto Tolaivillimaṅkalam you brought
And showed her the lotus-eyed Lord of bejewelled radiance;
Rapturous she is since, with tears torrential in her eyes
And with a heart in His beauty rooted, in that very direction she gazes.

Notes

(i) The effulgence of the God-love within is reflected on the Nāyakī's forehead. By her very nature, she would thaw down in ecstasy, in deep contemplation of the Lord and now that she has been brought by the elders, face to face, with the radiant Lord, bedecked with jewels, at Tolaivillimaṅkalam, her God-intoxication has gone to a very high pitch. The Lord, even when unadorned, is extremely charming and now, He is adorned, imparting lustre to the Jewels on His person. Unto Him, so exquisite, the elders brought the Nāyakī who just fainted in ecstasy and even after she recovered, she would not lift her mind off Him and kept gazing in the direction of the Pilgrim centre. c.f. 'Ekastha hṛdayā nūnaṁ Rāmamevānupaśyati' (Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, Sundara Kāṇḍa) So then, the chances of the elders getting the

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Nāyakī restored to them were next to nil. The Nāyaki's love is unceasingly whirling, like the whirlpool in a stream, boring deeper and deeper but never scattering and passing away.

(ii) *The torrential tears*: When Maṇakkāl Nampi discoursed about God, Āḷavantār (later, Saint Yāmunācārya), the Royal listener caught the spark all right and exclaimed that he Just can't exist without beholding Him. Struck by this wonderful response, the great preceptor led Āḷavantār to the august presence of Lord Raṅganātha, on seeing Whom, Yāmuna broke into tears, full and flooding. Like unto the dry match-stick, which readily strikes fire, the devout have but to be told about God and the heart immediately yearns to see Him; He has but to be seen and it makes them weep with tears of joy like Saint Nammāḻvār.

nōkkum pakkam ellām karumpcṭu cennel ōṅku centāmarai
vāykkum taṇ poruṇal vaṭakarai vaṇ tolaivillimaṅkalam
nōkkumēl, at ticai allāl, maṟu nōkku ilaḷ; vaikal nāḷtōṟum
vāykkoḷ vācakamum maṇivaṇṇaṇ nāmamē ivaḷ, aṉṉaimīr!
(VI–5–6)

Translation

Ye, elders, off Tolaivillimaṅkalam, the lovely city on the north bank
Of the cool Porunal, full of red lotus flowers in the tanks,
Where stand Sugar-canes and paddy crops tall, where'er one turns,
This young lady, her eyes can't lift and utters she the words,
At all times, spelling out only the names of the gem-hued Lord.

Notes

(i) Mostly, the Nāyakī is in a trance state and she seldom opens her eyes; if ever she did open the eyes and saw anything, it was only this pilgrim centre with its romantic setting on the north bank of Tāmraparṇi (also known as Porunal), the cool river. If she opened her mouth, she would only spell out the Lord's glorious names. Well, these are the observations of the mate.

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(ii) In its esoteric meaning, the sweet sugar-cane denotes the devout, with a sweet bearing and disposition; the rich paddy crops, bent with the weight of the grains on the stalks, betoken the men of great learning, full of humility.

aṉṉaimīr! aṇi mā mayil ciṟumāṉ ivaḷ nammaik kaivalintu,
eṉṉa vārttaiyum kēṭkuṟāḷ, tolaivillimaṅkalam eṉṟu allāl;
muṉṉam nōṟṟa vitikolō? mukil-vaṉṉaṉ māyam kolō? avaṉ
ciṉṉamum tiruṇāmamum ivaḷ vāyaṉakaḷ tiruntavē. (VI–5–7)

Translation

Ye, mothers, this lady sweet, like the lovely peacock and the doe young,
Has out of our hands gone and she wouldn't hear about anything
But Tolaivillimaṇkalam; could this felicity on her devolve
By dint of accumulated merit or the cloud-hued Lord's sweet resolve?
How distinct does she spell out His names and attributes!

Notes

(i) The Nāyakī's lovely locks of hair are compared to the colourful plumes of the peacock and her bewitching eyes to those of the young doe.

(ii) The Lord's names and attributes gain colour, when they are spelt out by His devotees with inimitable fervour, as when Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar sweetly ejaculated the holy name, "Aḻakiya maṇavāḷapperumāḷ!" (Lovely Spouse), Śri Śomāśi Āṇṭāṉ entoned "Emperumāṉār!" (My own Lord, an epithet of Śrī Rāmānuja) and Anantāḻvaṉ uttered the holy name "Tiruvēṅkaṭam uṭaiyāṉ!" (The Lord of the holy hill, Tirupathi). It has been said that Vālmīki Bhagavān could impart special lustre to Rāmāyaṇa. The mate wonders whether all this felicity, the Nāyakī currently enjoys, could have accrued to her, by dint of her own merit and is led to think that it could be but the Lord's sweet spontaneous grace.

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tiruntu vētamum, vēḷviyum, tiru mā makaḷirum tām malintu
iruntu vāḷ porunal vaṭakarai vaṇ tolaivillimaṅkalam
karun taṭam kaṇṇi kaitoḻuta an nāḷ toṭaṅki in nāḷtoṛum
iruntu iruntu, aravintalōcaṇa! eṉṛu eṉṛē nāintu, iraṅkumē.
(VI–5–8)

Translation

Ye, elders, ever since this lady, with dark eyes large,
Started adoring Tolaivillimaṅkalam, the affluent city
On the north bank of river Porumal, full of felicity,
With scrupulous vedic chantings and rituals well done,
She calls out now and then, 'My lotus-eyed Lord', and dwindles down.

Note

The Nāyakī's eyes became dark through their absorption of, and deep penetration into the dark-hued Lord. From the moment, she worshipped the Lord, enshrined in this pilgrim centre, she got entranced by His lotus eyes and thawed down, when she addressed Him, as her lotus-eyed Lord. She couldn't go on repeating it, much as she would like to, as she dwindled down in a state of ecstasy.

iraṅki, nāḷtoṛum vāyverīi, ivaḷ kaṇṇa nīrkaḷ alamara,
maraṅkaḻum iraṅkum vakai, maṇivaṇṇavo! eṉṛu kūvumāl;
turaṅkam vāy piḷantāṉ uṟai tolaivillimaṅkalam eṉṛu, taṉ
karaṅkaḷ kūppit toḻum-avvūrt tirunāmam kaṛṛataṉ piṉṉaiyē.
(VI–5–9)

Translation

Ye, mothers, this young lady calls out, "oh, gem-hued Lord!"
Day in and day out, with her mind deeply absorbed,
And tears splashing down her eyes, moving trees besides;
Ever since she learnt the name of that city, Tolaivillimaṅkalam, where resides
The Lord who tore open the mouth of the demoniac horse,
In that direction she turns and with joined palms adores.

Note

Having been initiated into this pilgrim centre, the Nāyakī keeps on reciting the Lord's name, in such a manner that even the

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inanimate beings, like trees, are moved. If these hymns can move even the stony hearts of the uninitiated men of the present day, what doubt could there be about their impact on the contemporary men and things, when the songs flowed from the Āḻvār's rapturous lips! When Lord Kṛṣṇa played on the flute, Periyāḻvār would have it, that the trees shed honey in copious quantities, the flowers started falling down and the boughs bent down, in admiration. The voice of the yearning soul of the Āḻvār, with its mellifluity galore, would have doubtless made things around him react likewise. In fact, the mate says ' that city ', in line 4 of the song, because she cannot reproduce the sweetness with which the Nāyakī spells out ' Tiruttolaivillimaṅkalam. '

piṉṉaikol, nila mā makaḷkol, tirumakaḷkol, piṟantiṭṭāḷ?
eṉṉa māyam kolō! ival neṭumāḷ eṉṟē niṉṟu kūvumāḷ;
muṉṉi vantu, avaṉ niṉṟu, iruntu, uṟaiyum tolaivillimaṅkalam
ceṉṉiyāl vaṇaṅkum; avvūrt tirunāmam kēṭpatu cintaiyē.
(VI–5–10)

Translation

Perhaps this lady is Piṉṉai or Nilamakaḷ (Mother Earth), full of grace
Or Tirumakaḷ (Mahālakṣmi) herself, what a wonder it is, she keeps calling out
Neṭumāl (the all-pervading Lord) and bows before Tolaivillimaṅkalam where He stays,
And longs to hear the holy name of that place, by others spelt out!

Notes

(i) Looking at the Nāyakī's intense longing for Lord Kṛṣṇa, the mates guess that she might be Nappiṉṉā, reborn; and then, her rapturous meditation on the Lord's advent as Varāha, the Great Boar, makes them inclined to think that she might be an incarnation of Mother Earth. But still, the mates could not make up their minds, as the Nāyakī's devout contemplation of Lord Rāmā suggests the possibility of her being no less than Sītā, reborn. In his inimitable way, Nampiḷḷai would say

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that these divine consorts could, in certain respects, be compared to Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki, but she is of such incomparable excellence that one is left wondering whether she has taken this unique birth for the resuscitation of the whole world. What a wonder it is! Of course, anything can take place in the Lord's Universe.

(ii) Her own love for the Lord is of enormous dimensions and yet, the Nāyaki is overwhelmed by the Lord's love for her and calls Him out, in terms of His tall love, the all-conquering.

(iii) The Nāyakī loves to hear the name of this pilgrim centre, uttered by some one instead of mouthing it herself. The Lord is said to have come down to Tolaivillimaṅkalam and taken up His residence there, well ahead of the Nāyakī, so as to prepare the ground for the generation, in her, of such intense God-love.

cintaiyālum collālum ceykaiyiṉālum tēva pirānaiyē
tartai tāy eṉṟu aṭainta vaṇ kurukūravar caṭakōpaṉ
muntai āyirattuḷ ivai tolaivillimaṅkalattaic coṉṉa
centamiḻp pattum vallār aṭimaiceyvār tirumālukkē. (VI–5–11)

Translation

Those that can recite these songs ten,
Which unto holy Tolaivillimaṅkalam pertain,
Out of the hoary thousand composed by Caṭakōpaṉ
Of Kurukūr, who, by word, deed and thought, adored
The Lord Supreme as Father, Mother and all, rolled
In one, will service unto Him render for ever.

Note

The hoary thousand: It might be asked how this work is claimed to be antiquated while there is the distinct reference to Āḻvār as its author. The element of antiquity comes in automatically if one considers the parity, which this Dramiḍa Veda enjoys with its Sanskrit counterpart. These thousand hymns were ordained by the Lord, just like the Sanskrit Vedas, as

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revealed by His own words in Bhagavad Gītā, "Śrutis smṛtir Mamaivājñā'; the veracity and blemishlessness, claimed for the Sanskrit Vedas, hold good equally for the Dramiḍa Veda (See aphorism 45 of Ācārya Hṛdayam).

The chanters of this decad will be blest to render service unto the Divine couple, without break or blemish, as Lakṣmaṇa did.

Sixth Centum—Sixth Decad (VI-6) (Mālukku, vaiyam aḷanta)

Preamble

The last decad was put in the mouth of the mates of Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī, while, in the current decad, it is her mother who speaks out the desperate condition of her love-lorn daughter. The manner in which the Nāyakī is dwindling down, losing, one by one, her feminine charms and embellishments, is set out, stanza by stanza. As a matter of fact, in IV-8 ante, these very things which now get dropped off, were despised by the Nāyakī, as not worth possessing, insofar as they had no bearing on Divine Service. As she meditates on the wondrous deeds, performed by the Lord, in each of His various Incarnations and the special traits then exhibited by Him, the Nāyakī goes into raptures and her body thaws down and dwindles.

mālukku, vaiyam aḷanta maṇāḷaṟku,
nīlak karu niṟa mēka niyāyaṟku,
kōlac centāmaraik kaṇṇaṟku, eṉ koṅku alar
ēlak kuḻali iḻantatu-caṅkē. (VI–6–1)

Translation

Engrossed is my daughter, whose fragrant locks are with flowers bedecked,
In the cloud-hued Lord with lotus eyes red,
The Spouse, Who the entire Earth once measured,
Full of love unto His devotees and she has her bangles lost.

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Note

The Nāyaki withers down, as she gets absorbed in the Lord's features, His attributes and deeds. The head acquires elegance because of the locks of hair. Again, that head is praiseworthy, which bows down in reverence and thus, locks which impart beauty to the head, correspond to the reverential attitude, which makes the head worth its while.

caṅku, vil, vāḷ, taṇṭu, cakkarak kaiyaṟku,
ceṅkaṇivāyc ceyya tāmaraik kaṇṇaṟku,
koṅku alar taṇ am tuḷāy muṭiyāṉukku, eṉ
maṅkai iḷantatu-māmai niṟamē. (VI–6–2)

Translation

Meditating on the Lord with lovely lips and lotus eyes red,
On whose crown is the tuḷaci garland, cool and lovely, which honey sheds,
Who, the conch, the bow, the sword, the mace and discus wields,
My daughter has lost her complexion fair.

Note

Pining for communion with the Lord of such enchanting description, who spanned the worlds, the Nāyaki is off colour. So says the Mother.

niṟam kariyāṉukku, nīṭu ulaku uṇṭa
tiṟam kiḻar vāyc ciṟuk-kaḻvaṉ-avaṟku,
kaṟaṅkiya cakkarak kaiyavaṉukku, eṉ
piṟaṅku irum kūntal iḻantatu-pīṭē. (VI–6–3)

Translation

With her thoughts centred on the dark-hued Lord,
Who the discus dynamic does in His hand hold,
Whose lips suggest His having gulped down all the worlds.
Who, in His stomach small, hid many a big world,
My daughter with dense locks lovely, has her majestic bearing lost.

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Note

The Lord, as the great Saviour, sustained all the worlds, with their variegated contents, in His stomach, during the deluge. And yet, the Nāyakī distressingly feels that it is all mere story, inasmuch as He has failed to extend to her the protection she badly needs.

pītu uṭai nāṉmukaṉaip paṭaittāṉukku,
māṭu uṭai vaiyam aḷanta maṇāḷaṟku,
nāṭu uṭai maṉṉarkkut tūtu cel nampikku, eṉ
pāṭu uṭai alkul iḷantatu-paṉṟē. (VI–6–4)

Translation

My daughter, with broad tummy, has her natural pose lost,
Steeped in thoughts of the Lord Who from His navel did create
The majestic Nāṉmukaṉ (Brahmā), the Spouse Who the rich Earth spanned
And for the landed monarchs ran an errand.

Notes

(i) The Nāyakī's natural composure undergoes alarming modifications, as she keeps meditating on the Lord's traits, one by one.

(ii) Lord Kṛṣṇa ran an errand on behalf of the Pāṇḍavas, who would not be granted by their cousin, Duryodhana, even a square inch of land, not even a chair to sit on. And yet, the Pāṇḍavas are referred to, as the landed monarchs, in this song, as the Lord was on their side. The Nāyakī has just been thrown off her feet by the Lord's exhibition of such amazing condescension as running an errand and doing the meanest of jobs for His devotees.

paṉpu uṭai vētam payanta paraṉukku,
maṉ purai vaiyam iṭanta varākaṟku,
teṉ puṉal-paḷḷi em tēva pirāṉukku, eṉ
kaṉpuṉai kōtai iḷantatu-kaṟpē. (VI–6–5)

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Translation

My daughter, with locks attractive, has been thrown
Into mental imbalance, steeped in deep meditation
Of the Lord Supreme, Who did on limpid waters vast recline,
Who, as the Great Boar, did the earthen world lift
And (unto Brahmā) the sanctified Vedas did gift.

Note

The Śāstras have brought out the Lord's remarkable attention for His devotees' well-being and the various acts of benefaction, performed by Him for them. The mother now says that her daughter (Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī) has, in her present state of dejection, lost the perspective and begun to doubt seriously the veracity of these statements. She is perhaps inclined to think that Sages Vyāsa, Parāśara and Vālmīki might have been hired out by the Lord to say quite a few good things about Him, which, in reality, do not hold good.

kaṟpakak kā aṉa nal-pala tōḷaṟku,
poṉ-cuṭark kuṉṟu aṉṉa pūṉ taṇ muṭiyaṟku,
nal-pala tāmarai nāḷ-malark kaiyaṟku, eṉ
vil-puruvakkoṭi tōṟṟatu meyyē. (VI–6–6)

Translation

My tender daughter, with bow-like brows lovely, has lost control
Over her body, buried in meditation of the Lord, sweet to behold,
With shoulders many, like an orchard and arms like lotus, in fresh bloom,
Wearing the crown lovely which does like a gold mount gleam.

Note

(i) The loss of control over the body denotes the Nāyakī's state of ecstasy, when she is entirely beside herself. It is indeed a remarkable irony that the Nāyakī, from whom the Lord cannot bear being apart even for a split second, should get lost in meditation of the exquisite form of the Lord, whereas Sita said, as reported

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by Hanumān, that she could wait for a month for her reclamation by Rāma.

(ii) The Nāyakī's brow has the reputation of making the Lord turn His attention in the direction of her glance, as indicated by the twist of her brow. This ensures the influx of the Lord's grace on all those associated with the Āḻvār.

mey amar pal kalaṉ naṉku aṉintāṉukku,
pai araviṉ aṇaip paḷḷiyiṉāṉukku,
kaiyoṭu kāl ceyya kaṇṇa-pirāṉukku, eṉ
taiyal iḻantatu-taṉṉuṭaic cāyē. (VI–6–7)

Translation

Gone is the charisma of my daughter, entranced by thoughts
Of Kaṇṇaṉ whose hands and feet are red,
Who lay on the hooded serpent, His lovely bed,
Wearing many a jewel, well matched with His Form exquisite.

Note

The Nāyakī's mother says that her daughter sincerely believed that all these enchanting features were possessed by the Lord, only to hold a rapport with her and now that it has turned out to be otherwise, she feels frustrated and withers down.

cāyak kurumtam ocitta tamiyaṟku,
māyac cakaṭam utaitta maṇāḷaṟku,
pēyaip piṇampaṭap pāl uṇ pirāṉukku, eṉ
vācak kuḻali iḻantatu-māṉpē. (VI–6–8)

Translation

My daughter with fragrant locks has her grandeur lost,
With a mind poised in the Lord Who the twin trees did uproot,
The Spouse who to pieces dashed the wicked demon in the wheel
And sucked unto death the breast of Pūthanā, the devil.

Note

The mother regretfully watches the present miserable condition of her love-smitten daughter, shorn of all her erstwhile grace and grandeur.

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māṉpu amai kōlattu em māyak kuṟalaṟku,
cēṇ cuṭark kuṉṟu aṉṉa ceñcuṭar mūrttikku,
kāṇ perum tōṟṟattu em kākutta nampikku. eṉ
pūṇ puṇai meṉmulai tōṟṟatu-poṟpē. (VI–6–9)

Translation

My bejewelled daughter, with slender breasts, has lost all her charm,
Wrapt in thoughts of Kākuttan (Lord Rāma) of exquisite Form,
Radiant like red blaze, the shining mount tall,
Vāmana, the wondrous, whose charm did enthral one and all.

Note

Says the mother, in a fit of depression: "Although born to entice the Lord by her amazing beauty, yet my daughter has now lost all her beauty, wrapt in thoughts of the handsome Lord".

poṟpu amai nīḷmuṭip pūn taṇ tuḻāyaṟku,
mal-poru tōḷ uṭai māyap pirāṉukku,
niṟpaṇa pal uruvāy niṟkum māyaṟku, eṉ
kaṟpu uṭaiyāṭṭi iḷantatu-kaṭṭē. (VI–6–10)

Translation

Stripped of all her attainments stands my daughter of knowledge sound,
Wrapped in thoughts of the wondrous Lord, Who does abound
In one and all, still and mobile, wearing the tuḻaci garland
Cool and lovely, on His crown, tall and majestic, whose shoulders
Are more than a match for the world's most mighty wrestlers.

Note

Having singled out the loss suffered by the entranced Nāyakī, in each of the preceding songs, the Mother now says that her daughter has indeed lost all her feminine attainments, without any exception. The Lord's crown, by itself, is exceedingly attractive and the tuḻaci garland, worn on it, enhances its grandeur still further, keeping the Nāyakī spell-bound.

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kaṭṭu eḻil-cōlai nal vēṅkaṭavāṇaṇaik
kaṭṭu eḻil-teṉ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ col
kaṭṭu eḻil āyirattu ip pattum vallavar
kaṭṭu eḻil vāṉavar pōkam uṇpārē. (VI–6–11)

Translation

Those that are well-versed in these songs ten,
Out of the thousand, metrically excellent, composed by Caṭakōpaṉ Of Kurukūr with its ramparts lovely, in adoration
Of the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, with orchards full of fragrance,
Will on a par with Celestials enjoy heavenly bliss *par excellence*.

Note

The Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam is referred to, but once, in this decad, and that too, in the end-song. This is similar to the solitary mention of this Deity, made in the opening song of III-9.

Sixth Centum—Seventh Decad (VI-7) (Uṇṇum Cōṟu, Parukum nīr)

Preamble

The mother continues her narration, in this decad also. She lay beside her love-lorn daughter, soothing her, as best as could be done. But suddenly, the mother groped the bed next to hers and discovered that her daughter was not in it. The former searched for the latter, high and low, but in vain. The mother was, however, well aware of her daughter's exuberance of love for the Lord, enshrined at Tirukkōḷūr and, therefore, rightly concluded that the Nāyakī should have gone there. The Nāyakī's extraordinary devotion to that pilgrim centre is now voiced forth by the mother. Actually, the Āḻvār's longing for incessant communion with the Lord at Tirukkōḷūr finds expression, in this decad, the mother functioning as but the mouthpiece.

uṇṇum cōṟu, parukum nīr, tiṇṇum veṟṟilaiyum, ellām
kaṇṇaṉ em perumāṉ eṉṟu eṉṟē, kaṇkaḷ nīr malki,
maṉṉiṉuḷ avaṉ cīr vaḷam mikkavaṉ ūr viṇavi,
tiṇṇam eṉ iḷamāṉ pukum ūr-tirukkōḷūrē. (VI–7–1)

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Translation

'Tis certain that my daughter like unto the doe young,
Who, with tears welling up her eyes, always keeps saying,
Kaṇṇaṉ is unto her the food of the hungry, beverage of the thirsty
And the betel chewed for pleasure, has, after due enquiry,
Gone to Tirukkōḷūr where resides the Lord, grand and majestic.

Notes

(i) The famous author of 'Ācārya Hṛdayam' has succinctly brought out the superior excellence of the Āḻvār vis-a-vis the Ṛṣīs. Whereas the Ṛṣīs subsisted on the forest produce, such as roots, fruits etc, Lord Kṛṣṇa was the sole Sustainer for Nammāḻvār, the very food needed for appeasing hunger, the water required for quenching thirst and the betels one chews for pleasure, the one and only source catering to his God-hunger, God-thirst and God-love. The Āḻvār was 'Kṛṣṇa tṛṣṇā tatva', the very personification of God-love. Unto him, Vāsudeva was all, "Vāsudevas sarvamiti". The gnostic mother was, therefore, quite sure that her daughter of such a disposition would have found her way, after due enquiry, to Tirukkōḷūr, the place where the Lord exhibits the exuberance of His wealth and auspicious qualities, in super-abundance.

(ii) An interesting question was posed by Āḷavantār (Saint Yāmunācārya) to his audience, as to which of the two, Saint Nammāḻvār who looked upon God as his food etc., or Saint Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār who exclaimed that the Lord had stolen away his soul, they had to be more apprehensive about. They observed. "We have indeed to fear more, the former's precipitate flight, alone and unaided, to the shrine at Tirukkōḷūr, than for the latter who is already in the company of the Lord at Tiruvāli, no matter how the union came about, stealth or otherwise. Our sympathies are naturally with Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī, on her lone journey, in quest of the Lord of her heart". The great master, however, thought otherwise; according to him, there was the fear

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of Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār and the Lord getting into a state of delirium on account of their rapturous reciprocation of ravishing love, a state of inebriation or stupor, such as the addicts of dōtura-narcotic fall into. The plight of Saint Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār, drowned in love, therefore, excited their fear more than that of Saint Nammāḻvār who was yet lonely and self-conscious, full of ardent expectation of meeting his beloved Lord.

(iii) The eyes of the Saints, soaked in God-love, swim with pearls of tears of delight. As Mahābhārata puts it, even God-Science, such as Upanishads, is remote from the ambrosia of Lord Hari's narratives, if it fails to melt the heart, wet the eye and thrill the frame. Naṅcīyar used to say: " Thrice did I go over the treatise of Tiruvāymoḷi with Tirunaraiyūr Araiyar but none of the teachings did affect and melt my heart so much as when I actually witnessed him once, when explaining a passage, transported into the region of ecstasy, with tears rolling down the cheek ",

(iv) A native of Tirukkōḷūr left the holy land and employed himself elsewhere, tilling the land. Anaṇṭāḻvāṉ, a great devotee, who happened to see him, enquired where he came from. On learning that the man hailed from Tirukkōḷūr, Anantāḻvāṉ grew furious and exclaimed that one could as well graze a couple of asses, staying in that holy land and eke out one's livelihood, rather than forsake the land of eternal living where the Eternal Master stays, in all His splendour. Similarly, when Saint Rāmānuja was proceeding to Tirukkōḷūr, he saw a woman coming from the opposite direction and elicited from her that she was actually coming from holy Tirukkōḷūr. The Saint exclaimed, in great surprise " What, is it at all possible for those who have once taken their abode in that holy place to leave it ? "

(v) Tirukkōḷūr is one of the eighteen pilgrim centres of Pāṇḍiya nādu. It is also the birthplace of Maturakavi Āḻvār.

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ūrum, nāṭum, ulakamum, taṉṉaippōl avaṉuṭaiya
pērum tārkaḷumē pitaṟṟa, kaṟpu vāṉ iṭaṟi,
cērum nal vaḷam cēr paḷaṉat tirukkōḷūrkkē
pōrum kol, uraiyīr, koṭiyēṉ koṭi-pūvaikaḷē? (VI–7–2)

Translation

Ye, Pūvai birds, this sinner's daughter, who makes
The whole world, hall and hamlet, prattle like herself the Lord's names
And His insignia, breaking the bounds of modesty, has it seems
Reached Tirukkōḷūr, rich and fertile; will you unto me utter
If she would at least for your sake come back here?

Notes

(i) The mother enquiries of the little pūvai birds, the playmates of Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī, whether she would come back, at least for their sake. She is so dazed that she is not conscious of the fact that she can't expect a reply from the speechless birds.

(ii) The mother is at a loss to understand why her daughter should at all go elsewhere, in search of the Godly, having herself induced God-consciousness in one and all, in her native place itself, where every one keeps uttering the Lord's holy names and attributes like her. It is noteworthy that, to saints, the utterance of the holy name of God is so preciously sweet that they imagine, the whole world sings forth like themselves. The world is indeed acceptable to them when they invest it with their own divine sentiments and see God everywhere; otherwise, it becomes detestable, just like the Kingdom of Ayodhya itself, detested by Bharata, when Rāma was not there. Śrī Nampiḷḷai puts it that the mother questions the necessity for the Nāyakī going all the way to Tirukkōḷūr, while she could as well enjoy all that felicity in her native surroundings, the mutual enlightenment and entertainment in the domain of God-love, in the company of kindred souls.

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pūvai, paiṅkiḷikaḷ, pantu, tūtai, pūm puṭṭilkaḷ,
yāvaiyum tirumāl tirunāmaṅkaḷē kūvi, eḷum eṉ
pāvai-pōy iṉit taṉ paḷaṇaṯ tirukkōḷūrkkē–
kōvai vāy tuṭippa, maḷaikkaṇṇoṭu eṉ ceyyum kolō? (VI–7–3)

Translation

All that joy one derives from the articles of sport,
The ball, flower basket, cooking pots, little birds and parrots,
In singing the Lord's holy names my daughter would have,
And yet, I know not how she would actually fare
In Tirukkōḷūr, cool and fertile, with trembling lips red and tearful eyes.

Note

The mother says: "Even in her childhood days, when one could expect her to play with toys, my daughter revelled in singing the Lord's holy names. It is not as if she was devoid of the means of sustenance and had to go elsewhere, in search of it. I don't know why she has at all gone to Tiruk kōḷūr".

kollai eṉparkolō-kuṇam mikkaṇaḷ eṉpar kolō-
cillai vāyp peṇṭukaḷ, ayal-cēri uḷḷārum? ellē!
celvam malki avaṉ kiṭanta tirukkōḷūrkkē
mel iṭai nuṭaṅka iḷamāṉ cella mēviṉaḷē! (VI–7–4)

Translation

My daughter, like unto the doe young, has her mind made up
To go to plentiful Tirukkōḷūr where reclines the Lord,
Straining her waist thin; I know not whether the local gossips
And neighbouring women will praise her as Godly
Or condemn her as immodest and unruly.

Note

There are two ways of looking at the Nāyakī's behaviour. Those who have unflinching faith in salvation through the Lord's redemptive grace and await the descent of such grace on them, in due course, would certainly not countenance the Nāyakī running about, courting the Lord, while those, who are all

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agog for the quick consummation, the acceleration of the union with the Lord, cutting short the interval, would surely applaud the Nāyaki's flaming love and ardour. Thus there is scope for condemnation as well as felicitation of the Nāyaki, by the women of the village and those in the neighbouring village, giving rise to the mother's speculation, as above.

mēvi, naintu naintu, viḷaiyāṭaluṟāḷ eṉ ciṟut
tēvi; pōy, iṉit taṉ tirumāl tirukkōḷūril
pū iyal poḷilum, taṭamum, avaṉ kōyilum kaṇṭu,
āvi uḷ kuḷira, eṅṅaṉē ukakkumkol iṉṟē? (VI–7–5)

Translation

My little angelic daughter, in God-head engrossed, has thinned down
And from recreation refrains, she has from here gone
To her Lord unique in Tirukkōḷūr and to her heart's fill,
Enjoy she shall, the orchids fine, the tanks and the temple;
What a pity, watch I can't how indeed she regales!

Note

Even during childhood, the Nāyaki's sole pastime was to sing the holy names of the Lord while her playmates would want to indulge in routine recreation. And now, she has gone to the famous pilgrim centre, Tirukkōḷūr, abounding in lovely scenery, warming up her heart. The manner of her enjoyment will indeed be unique but the mother feels that she is not by the side of her daughter to watch her jubilation.

iṉṟu eṉakku utavātu akaṉṟa iḷamāṉ iṉip pōy,
teṉ ticait tilatam aṉaiya tirukkōḷūrkkē
ceṉṟu, taṉ tirumāl tirukkaṇṇum cevvāyum kaṇṭu,
niṉṟu niṉṟu naiyum-neṭum kaṇkaḷ paṇi malkavē. (VI–7–6)

Translation

My doe-like daughter is unto me of no avail,
She has left me and gone to Tirukkōḷūr, the jewel
Of the South and there she would just dwindle,

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Gazing at the Lord's lovely eyes and lips red,
With tears of joy swelling up her eyes broad.

Note

This song is but a follow-up of the preceding song, describing the manner of the Nāyakī's rejoicing, at the other end.

malku nīrk kaṇṇoṭu, maiyal uṟṟa maṉattiṉaḷāy,
allum naṉ pakalum neṭumāl eṉṟu aḻaittu, iṉip pōy,
celvam malki avaṉ kiṭanta tirukkōḷūrkkē
olki olki naṭantu, eṅṅaṉē pukumkol ocintē? (VI–7–7)

Translation

I wonder how my daughter, weak and tired,
With tears brimming the eyes and by deep love fired
For the Lord of her heart, beckoning Him, day and night,
Could trudge her way to Tirukōḷūr, all right.

Note

The mother has now begun to suspect whether her daughter, weighed down by God-love, could have at all trudged along, to Tirukkōḷūr without getting bogged down on the way.

ocinta nuṉ iṭaimēl kaiyai vaittu, nontu nontu,
kacinta neñciṉaḷāy, kaṇṇa nīr tuḻumpac cellumkol-
ocinta oṉ malarāḷ koḻunaṉ tirukkōḷūrkkē
kacinta neñciṉaḷāy, emmai nītta em kārikaiyē? (VI–7–8)

Translation

With a mind, soaked in love, unto Tirukkōḷūr drawn,
Where resides the Spouse of Lakṣmī, the lotus-born,
My pretty daughter has forsaken me and gone;
Holding her waist, thin and emaciated, in great pain,
With tearful eyes, could she have to her destination gone?

Note

The mother thinks that the Nāyakī should have forsaken the former and gone to the Lord at Tirukkōḷūr, to worship the holy conjunction of the Lord and the Divine Mother

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(Lakṣmī), banking on Her support, sure and sweet. At the same time, the mother also apprehends whether the frail daughter could at all stand the strain of the journey to that place and make it all right.

kāriyam nallaṇakaḷ avai kāṇil, eṉ kaṇṇaṉukku eṉṟu
īriyāy iruppāḷ; itu ellām kiṭakka, iṉip pōy,
cēri pal paḻi tūy iraippa, tirukkōḷūrkkē
nēriḻai naṭantāḷ-emmai oṉṟum niṉaittilaḷē! (VI–7–9)

Translation

My bejewelled daughter with her love-laden heart
Would all things good, unto her Kaṇṇaṉ set aprt;
Leaving all the wealth over here she has set out
Towards Tirukkōḷūr; the folks here will come out
With all sorts of scandals against her but she minds not
All that and unto her we really matter not.

Note

Whereas the worldlings would want all good things for themselves and their sons and daughters, Parāṅkuśa Nāyakī would, in the exuberance of her love for Lord Kṛṣṇa, insist that all good things be earmarked for His use. With such great wealth of God-love in her, where was the need for her to go anywhere else? This is what agitates the mind of the mother; rather, she feels impoverished without the Nāyakī and pines for the latter's attention. As a matter of fact, one's own children become worthy of reverence and worship, when they become God's own. Saint Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār said in Periya Tirumoḻi, VII-2-9, " How can I look upon the (Spiritual) son, who goes to worship the Lord at Tirukaṇṇapuram, as my (bodily) son? ". Indeed, worthiness makes no distinction between father and son, preceptor and disciple. It is said that one Ammuṇiyāḻvār used to prostrate unto his own disciple, being fully conscious of the latter's spiritual greatness, demanding such reverence. One day, the great Naṅcīyar led his disciple, Nampiḷḷai, to the holy assembly, where the former loudly acclaimed the greatness of the latter.

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niṉaikkilēṉ, teyvaṅkāḷ! neṭum kaṇ iḷamāṉ iṉip pōy,
aṉaittu ulakum uṭaiya aravintalōcaṉaṉait
tiṉaittaṉaiyum viṭāḷ; avaṉ cēr tirukkōḷūrkkē
maṉaikku vāṉ paḻiyum niṉaiyāḷ-cella vaittaṉaḷē. (VI–7–10)

Translation

Oh, gods, my broad-eyed daughter, like the doe young, has gone
To the lotus-eyed Lord Supreme, in Tirukkōḷūr, all of a sudden,
With no thought of infamy on her family heaped and gazes
At Him there, all the time, I am indeed in a maze.

Note

Unable to brook separation from her daughter, the mother feels that the Nāyakī has been away from her, for quite a long time. It was indeed high time, she had come back but then the mother visualises the possibility of the Nāyakī getting absorbed in the exquisite charm of the lotus-eyed Lord (Aravintalōcaṉa) standing in front of the Deity, all the time, with no intermission. In such a frame of mind, there was no question of her being worried about what others might say about her abnormal behaviour and how it would affect the reputation of the family, as a whole. The mother addressed the Celestials in the upper regions, as if to enlist their sympathy.

vaitta mā nitiyām matucūtaṉaiyē alaṟṟi,
kottu alar poḻil cūḻ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ coṉṉa
pattu nūṟṟuḷ ip pattu avaṉ cēr tirukkōḷūrkkē
cittam vaittu uraippār tikaḻ poṉ—ulaku āḷvārē. (VI–7–11)

Translation

Those that chant these songs ten, with devotion to Tirukkōḷūr,
Out of the thousand composed by Caṭakōpaṉ of Kurukūr,
With flower gardens in fine array all round, in adoration of Matucūtaṉ,
The accumulated Treasure supreme, will over the Eternal Land, reign.

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Note

The Lord, as the Treasure supreme, can be freely drawn upon, by one and all, without any fear of extinction, being an inexhaustible fountain of bliss. The chanters of this decad will have none of the difficulties the Āḻvār faced, such as the confrontation between Mother and daughter; on the other hand, they can hold perfect sway over Heaven.

Sixth Centum—Eighth Decad (VI-8)
(Poṉ-ulaku āḻīrō)

Preamble

This is yet another decad, where the Āḻvār sends messages to the Lord through birds, bees etc, the two earlier ones being I-4 and VI-1. This is the third such decad and the fourth and the last decad of this kind is IX-7. The technique, in this regard, having been already elucidated in the preamble to I-4, it would suffice if the distinguishing feature of this decad is brought out, namely, the message is now sent to the Lord in His 'Para' or transcendent and 'Antaryāmi' or hidden Form, as Internal Controller of all, as could be gathered mainly from Stanzas 4 and 5 of this decad. It may be recalled that the messages in I-4 and VI-1 were conveyed to the Lord in His 'Vyuha' and 'Vibhava' aspects, respectively.

The Nāyakī, who set out for the coveted Tirukkōḻūr, couldn't reach the place; as apprehended by her mother, she got bogged down *en route*, due to her intense God-love and, stranded half way through, she sends the messages, as in this decad. The trait of the Lord, invoked by the Nāyakī, is 'compassion' as Piḷḷāṉ would put it, as could also be seen from the oft-repeated rerain of the songs, in this decad. According to Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, the Lord's feeling of oneness with His devotees (aikarasya), His sense of identity with them, is invoked, vide the sixth stanza.

poṉ-ulaku āḻīrō, puvaṇi muḻutu āḻīrō-
nal nalap puḷḷiṉaṅkāḷ! viṇaiyāṭṭiyēṉ nāṉ irantēṉ;
muṉ ulakkaṅkaḷ ellām paṭaitta mukil vaṇṇaṉ, kaṇṇaṉ,
eṉ nalam koṇṭa pirāṉ-taṉakku, eṉ nilaimai uraittē. (VI–8–1)

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Translation

Ye, birds of manners good, this sinner does entreat
That you should unto the cloud-hued Lord, Who did create
The worlds, the Benefactor, Who in me instilled love so great,
Report my condition; I will then unto you grant
The right to rule the entire Earth and Heaven grand.

Notes

(i) Two special points are made out, in this song. No reward is too great for those who mediate between us and God, not even the Earth and Heaven, put together. Therefore it is, aphorism 432 of 'Śrī Vacaṇa Bhūṣaṇa' avers that it would be possible to recompense the Ācāryā, in an adequate measure only if there were four vibhūtīs and two Gods. The idea is that any reward, short of both the worlds (the Nitya Vibhūti or the Eternal Land and the Līlā vibhūti or the sportive Universe) and God Himself, will be inadequate and, in order to make a suitable reward, two sets of each would be necessary, an obvious impossibility.

(ii) Again, the Āḻvrā's greatness is such that he has the power to grant to whomsoever he wishes, sovereignty over Earth and Heaven. God's love for the Saints is so great that they are endowed with the Lord's own powers, in this respect. Only a superficial observer, who is just puzzled over the Āḻvār falling at the feet of birds and bees to carry his message to the Lord, will question the Āḻvār's competence, as above. The questioner will do well to realise that the Āḻvār has been deliberately kept on, in this world, by the munificent Lord, so as to bequeath to His devotees, the nectarean hymns to subsist on. The Lord is indeed so pliable unto the Āḻvār that He unreservedly places Himself and all His possessions at his disposal. The messages, such as those featured in this decad, are but facets of the Āḻvār's God-love of matchless intensity.

(iii) Tradition has it that Aruḷāḷapperumāḷ Emperumāṉār (a disciple of Śrī Rāmānuja) made a request to Kūrattaḻvāṉ (an intimate disciple of Rāmānuja) to plead with Lord

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Raṅganātha to take the former to Heaven. Instances of this kind could easily be multiplied.

mai amar vāḷ neṭum kaṇ maṅkaimār muṉṟu eṉ kai iruntu,
ney amar iṉ aṭicil niccal pāloṭu mēvīrō-
kai amar cakkarattu eṉ kaṉivāyp perumāṉaik kaṇṭu,
mey amar kātal colli, kiḷikāḷ! viraintu ōṭi vantē. (VI–8–2)

Translation

Ye, parrots, meet you should my red-lipped Lord,
Holding the discus and convey my desire to get locked
In His sweet embrace; come back quick and daily take
In my hand perched, porridge sweet, mixed with ghee and milk,
In front of the mates with long, lovely eyes with collyrium treated.

Note

Having offered both Heaven and Earth to her emissaries, in the last song, the Nāyakī now offers to give her very self unto them, a more precious gift, coveted by the Lord Himself and that too, not secretly, but in front of all her mates. It is noteworthy that the Nāyakī indicates beforehand how she would reward her emissaries. The accent thus ultimately rests on service unto the Lord's devotees.

ōṭivantu, eṉ kuḻalmēl oḷi mā malar ūṭīrō,
kūṭiya vaṇṭiṉaṅkāḷ! kurunāṭu uṭai aivarkaṭku āy,
āṭiya mā neṭum tērppaṭai nīṟu eḻac ceṟṟa pirāṉ
cūṭiya taṇ-tuḻavam uṇṭa tū maṭu vāykaḷ koṇṭē. (VI–8–3)

Translation

Ye, jolly swarm of bees, better go and suck the honey
From the cool tuḷaci on the locks of my Lord,
Who to pieces got smashed steeds fine and chariots large
And victory won for the five of them (Pāṇḍavas), come back quickly
And, amid the flowers bright, on my hair make merry.

Note

Here is a case of collective bargaining by a swarm of bees, on behalf of the Nāyakī. And when they come back with

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their mouths, soaked in honey from the Lord's locks, they could jolly well play right on the Nāyakī's head and thus indirectly feed her with the Lord's honey.

tū matu vāykaḷ koṇṭuvantu, eṉ mullaikaḷmēl tumpikāḷ!
pū matu uṇṇac cellil, viṉaiyēṉaip poyceytu akaṉṟa
mā matu vār taṇ tuḻāy muṭi vāṉavar-kōṉaik kaṇṭu,
yām ituvō takkavāṟu eṉṉavēṇṭum kaṇṭīr, nuṅkaṭkē. (VI–8–4)

Translation

Ye, beetles sweet, lurking in Jasmine flowers by me reared,
When next in search of honey you go, meet the Lord
Of the Celestials in Heaven, sporting cool tuḷaci garland
On His crown, Who with this sinner freely mingled,
As in a dream and left, and say ' tis hardly meet
That He should unto sovereignty stick and from me depart.

Notes

(i) The beetles, ever in quest of honey, are directed by the Nāyakī to the Lord in Heaven, on whose crown is honey-studded tuḷaci garland, so as to gather the honey therefrom and incidentally tell the Lord that He should not keep aloof from her, at that distance, gloating over His transcendent glory. It is through such mediation by the God's chosen few, His detachment from us is changed into attachment.

(ii) The creatures were languishing without honey, as the flowers on the Nāyakī's locks as well as the surrounding gardens had all dried up, due to her separation from the Lord. And so, the Nāyakī directs them to the Lord in Heaven, sporting tuḷaci garlands, studded with honey.

(iii) Lest the Nāyakī should collapse, if ever she got scent of her impending separation from the Lord, He was telling her, during their erstwhile rapport, that He would never part from her. The Nāyakī takes the blame on herself that it is her sin that made even the truthful Lord utter lies, in this manner, during their erstwhile rapport.

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nuṅkaṭku yāṉ uraikkēṉ vammiṉ, yāṉ vaḻartta kiḷikāḷ!
vem kaṇ puḷ-ūrntu vantu, viṉaiyēṉai neñcam kavarnta
ceṅkaṇ-karumukilai, ceyya vāyc ceḻuṅ kaṟpakattai,
eṅkuc ceṉṟākilum kaṇṭu, ituvō takkavāṟu? eṉmiṉē. (VI–8–5)

Translation

Come here, ye, my pet parrots, let me unto you tell,
Be it anywhere, You have to go and meet the cloud-hued Lord,
The lotus-eyed, the wish-yielding tree, unique, mounted on
the hot-eyed bird,
Who unto me came and stole this sinner's heart; Him do tell
' Tis not meet that He should from me be apart.

Notes

(i) *Be it anywhere*: Go and ferret Him out, wherever He might be hiding, even as Hanumān solemnly resolved that he shall go to swarga and find out Sītā even if he couldn't locate her in Laṅkā. It is this phrase that gives the clue for the interpretation that this song deals with the ' Antaryāmi ' (hidden or all-pervading) aspect of the Lord, as well.

(ii) *Unique wish—yielding tree*: What indeed makes the Lord unique, as distinguished from the legendary ' Kaṟpaka ' tree, has been set out admirably in Īṭu commentary; The classical tree can only grant the wish of others; it has no wish of its own nor can it make over itself to others. But the Lord can and does, of His own will, give Himself over to His devotees. The Nāyakī feels that the Lord has gifted away to her both His vibhūtīs (the Eternal land and the sportive universe), in such a manner that she could, in turn, gift them away to any one of her choice.

(iii) The hot-eyed bird, referred to, in this song, is Garuḍa who frowns on the ungodly and blisters them with his looks.

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eṉ miṉṉu nūl mārvaṉ, eṉ karum perumāṉ, eṉ kaṇṇaṉ,
taṉ maṉṉu nīḷ kaḷalmēl taṉ tuḻay namakku aṉṟi nalkāṉ;
kalmiṉkaḷ eṉṟu ummai yāṉ, kaṟpiyāvaitta mārṟamcolli,
celmiṉkaḷ-tīviṉaiyēṉ vaḻartta ciṟu pūvaikaḷē! (VI-8-6)

Translation

Ye, little Pūvai birds, by this fell sinner reared,
Go unto my dark-hued Kaṇṇaṉ with shining sacred thread
On His winsome chest which unto me He once gave,
Sweet and docile, He will to none but us give
The cool tuḻaci, decorating His feet long; unto Him recite
The hymns I have taught, remembering them quite *in tact.*

Notes

(i) The little Pūvai birds, commissioned by the Nāyakī to carry her message to the Supreme Lord, were naturally diffident about getting the Lord's attention. The Nāyakī, therefore, enthuses them by saying that the Lord, who had enticed her by His sweet decorations, exquisite Form and amazing simplicity, would surely give unto His devotees, the tuḻaci worn on His feet. As a matter of fact, the sacred basil is worn by the Lord on His shoulders and chest, crown and feet and yet, the devotees specially long for the tuḻaci, worn on the Lord's lovely feet, their safe haven. The Lord, who completely identified Himself with His devotees, would give the tuḻaci on His feet to none but them.

(ii) *This fell Sinner*: The Nāyakī says this, in her state of separation from the Lord, rather feels vexed at that she has to take work from her pets, instead of fondling them in the sweet company of her Lord.

(iii) Our great preceptors have taught the 'Mantra Ratna' (Dvayam) to one and all, without distinction of big and small. Likewise, the Nāyakī has taught even these little birds the truth about the Lord, how He would surely yield the tuḻaci from His feet to the aspiring devotees and that one of such great compassion could ill-afford to be away from the Nāyakī.

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(iv) The disciples, who stood reverently at the bed-side of Saint Aruḷāḷapperumāḷ Emperumāṉār towards the fag end of his stay in this abode, found that the Saint was exercising his mind over some thing. On enquiry, they elicited, that he was meditating on how a simple bird (dove) caused grief to Lord Rāma and literally bled His heart. Vibhīṣaṇa's admission to Śrī Rāma's camp was hotly debated, down below, while the supplicant was anxiously poised in mid-air, having entrusted himself to His keeping. The Lord was, however, annoyed over the delay in responding to the destitute's call, caused by such a debate and He affirmed that whosoever sought refuge in Him, be he a friend or foe, was entitled to His protection without demur. Declaring this creed, the Lord also cited the episode which won for a mere dove, deathless praise. Overcoming fear and hatred, the male dove welcomed the slayer of his mate and fed, on his own flesh, the weary fowler. Verily, this episode should have wounded the Lord's heart sorely, when eventually He slew Rāvaṇa, who had kept Sītā in captivity. Nampiḷḷai used to give out the full import of this episode, thus: "Once we confide in the Lord and entrust ourselves to His keeping, as Vibhīṣaṇa did, this simple gesture carries us on to the very acme of spiritual eminence. After our surrender unto God, as the Sole Refuge, He puts through the process of salvation and such is His glory, perfection and grace on which we have but to implicitly rely. We don't have to bend even a blade of grass for our salvation".

pūvaikaḷ pōl niṟattaṉ, puṇṭarīkaṅkaḷ pōlum kaṇṇaṉ,
yāvaiyum yāvarum āy niṉṟa māyaṉ, eṉ āḻip pirāṉ,
māvai val vāy piḷanta matucūtaṟku eṉ māṟṟam colli,
pāva·kaḷ! tīrkkiṟṟirē, viṉaiyāṭṭiyēṉ pācaṟavē? (VI–8–7)

Translation

My dolls, can you my message convey
Unto the wondrous Lord of blue tint and lotus eyes,
Who unto me displayed His lovely discus,

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Who the forms of all things and beings acquires,
Who slew Matu and split the mouth of a demoniac horse,
And this sinner's miserable plight allay?

Note

The Nāyaki's plight is such that she is obliged to seek the assistance of even inanimate things like dolls; the Supreme Lord seems to be indifferent while the mobile creatures like the winged birds have their own occupations. In the last resort, she falls back upon her very playthings. The folks around question why at all she should agitate like this, when the Lord is indifferent. The Nāyaki's answer is that she just can't but come under His spell when she meditates on His charming complexion, bewitching eyes, auspicious traits and wondrous deeds.

pācaṟavu eyti, iṉṉē viṉaiyēṉ eṉai ūḻi naivēṉ!
ācu aṟu tūvi veḷḷaik kuṟukē! aruḷceytu, oruṇāḷ
mācu aṟu nīlac cuṭar muṭi vāṉavar-kōṉaik kaṇṭu,
ēcu aṟum nummai allāl maṟunōkku iḷaḷ-pērttu maṟṟē. (VI–8–8)

Translation

You, immaculate stork with flawless plumes, please spare
A day for me, go and meet the Lord in Heaven
With bluish locks, pure and fine, and of Him enquire
How long this sinner should like this dwindle; tell Him, in fine
Except His impeccable Self, refuge for me there's none.

Note

The Nāyakī prays to the stork, near at hand, to carry her message to the Lord of the Celestials, in Heaven and bursts into grief. She can't articulate and spell out her woes, in detail, as both her grief and the Lord, whose separation is the cause thereof, are too deep for words.

pērttu maṟṟu ōr kalaṅkaṇ viṉaiyāṭṭiyēṉ nāṉ oṉṟu ilēṉ;
nīrt tiraimēl ulavi irai tēṉum ṟutā iṉaṅkāḷ!
kārt tiral mā mukil ṟōl kaṇṇaṉ, viṇṇavar-kōṉaik kaṇṭu,
vārttaṅkaḷ koṇṭu, aruḷi uraiyīr-vaikal vantiruntē. (VI–8–9)

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Translation

Ye, herds of herons, wading thro' waves, in search of food,
Other than you, this sinner has none to go and meet the Lord,
Like unto dense rain-clouds, Chief of the Celestials
And bring His message and recount graciously
Unto me, sitting beside me, days on end.

Note

These birds are commissioned by the Nāyakī to go and meet the Lord in Heaven, surrounded by Angels and regaling them (like unto rains, unleashed on the ocean instead of on the crops, withering away) and tell Him, His greatness lay not in His might and majesty in that transcendent setting but in His loving condescension unto the desolate Nāyakī who was dwindling, down below, sunk deep in dejection. And then, these birds were to bring back His message and keep recounting His words to her, sitting by her side, days on end, being the only source of sustenance for her, in the present context.

vantiruntu, ummuṭaiya maṇic cēvalum nīrum ellām,
antaram oṉṟum iṉṟi, alarmēl acaiyum aṉṉaṅkāḷ!
eṉ tiru mārvaṟku eṉṉai iṉṉavāṟu ivaḷ kāṇmiṉ eṉṟu,
mantirattu oṉṟu uṇartti, uraiyīr-maṟumāṟṟaṅkaḷē. (VI–8–10)

Translation

Ye, swans, in front of me, gliding gaily on flowers,
With your lovely males with no hindrance, go and tell
The Lord bearing Tiru on His chest, when alone in His chamber,
How I fare and unto me His reply do come and tell.

Note

The Swans are instructed by the Nāyakī, to disclose her critical condition to the Lord, when He retires to His private chamber, on the conclusion of His Durbar, so that it can catch the attention of 'Tiru', Lakṣmi, the Gracious Mother, the great Intercessor between the Lord and His Subjects. The birds are to bring back the Lord's reply and inform the Nāyakī.

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māṟṟaṅkaḷ āyntukoṇṭu, matucūta-pirāṉ aṭimēl
nāṟṟaṅkoḷ pūm poḻil cūḻ kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ coṉṉa
tōṟṟaṅkaḷ āyirattuḷ ivaiyum orupattum vallār
ūṟṟiṉkaṇ nuṇ maṇal pōl urukāniṟpar nīrāyē. (VI–8–11)

Translation

Those that are conversant with these songs ten,
Out of the thousand composed in choice diction
By Caṭakōpaṉ of Kurukūr, full of fragrant flower gardens,
Adoring Matucūtaṉ's lovely feet, will indeed thaw down
Like unto the sands minute in water springs.

Notes

(i) The end-song usually gives out the tangible (in concrete terms) benefit accrued by dint of learning the songs in this decad. Melting tenderness of heart is indeed a great virtue when one sees that only those with such a disposition can tread the path of Bhakti (God-love) and that is acquired by those who are conversant with this decad. Intangible though it might seem to the superficial reader, it is indeed a priceless possession worth coveting.

(ii) The gardens of Kurukūr are once again, in full bloom, seeing that the Nāyakī herself has derived sustenance from the certain hope that the message conveyed to the Lord in Heaven at His private chamber, will not go unheeded.

Sixth Centum—Ninth Decad (VI-9)
(Nīr āy nilaṉ āy)

Preamble

The Lord did not present Himself before the Āḻvār in spite of the errands run by his emissaries, as in the last decad. The Āḻvār, therefore, decided to raise his own clarion call of deep yearning, reaching the very Heavens, with robst faith in the fruition of his full-throated call for deliverance. It would indeed be well-nigh impossible for the Lord to stay in Heaven, once the Āḻvār's voice is heard by Him, over there.

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nīr āy, nilaṉ āy, tī āy, kāl āy, neṭu vāṉ āy,
cīr ār cuṭarkaḷ iraṇṭu āy, civaṉ āy, ayaṉ āṉāy!
kūr ār āḻi veṉ caṅku ēnti, koṭiyēṉpāl
vārāy orunāḷ-maṇṇum viṇṇum makiḻavē. (VI–9–1)

Translation

Oh, Lord, You pervade the elements, one and all,
The Sun, the Moon, Civaṉ and Ayaṉ, as Internal Controller of them all;
Please appear before this sinner, for a day at least, holding the discus sharp
And the white conch so that Heaven and Earth do rejoice.

Note

The Āḻvār could certainly cognise the Universal Form of the Lord, in the created world of multifarious things and creatures, even as Prahlāda did. There was obviously no need, in that case, for him to send emissaries to the Lord, here and there, as he has been doing. And now, the Āḻvār clarifies his stand; he pines for the Lord's extraordinary Form of exquisite charm, wielding the sharp discus and the white conch, the Lord's 'Divya maṅgala vigraha', the Supernal Form. It is for beholding this enthralling Form of the Lord, even if it be but once, that the Āḻvār is pouring out his heart. Did not Arjuna insist, after beholding the Lord's Viśvarūpa' (the breath taking Cosmic Form of formidable dimensions) that He be seen as the lovely Kṛṣṇa, as before, with just four arms, as against the thousands shown to him?

maṇṇum viṇṇum mak'ḷa, kuṟaḷ āy, valam kāṭṭi,
maṇṇum viṇṇum koṇṭa māya ammāṉē!
naṇṇi uṇai nāṉ kaṇṭu, ukantu, kūttāṭa,
naṇṇi, orunāḷ ñālattūṭē naṭavāyē. (VI–9–2)

Translation

Oh, wondrous Lord, as the midget (Vāmana), your bewitching Form,
The whole Universe did enjoy, you did (from Bali) take

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All the worlds; for a day at least, do unto this land come,
So that I dance around, under the magic spell of your walk.

Note

Unto the Āḻvār who invited the Lord to come down here and exhibit His superb Form, the Lord would appeár to have told that He would rather comply with the Āḻvār's request after lifting him up to Heaven, in due course. But the Āḻvār insists that He, who displayed His exquisite Form to Asuras like Mahā Bali, shouldn't hesitate to respond to his (Āḻvār's) devout call and regale him, right here.

ñālattūtē naṭantum, niṉṟum, kiṭantu, iruntum,
cālap pala nāḷ ukamtōṟu, uyirkaḷ kāppāṉē!
kōlat tiru mā makaḷōṭu uṉṉaik kūṭātē,
cālap pala nāḷ, aṭiyēṉ iṉṉum taḷarvēṉō? (VI–9–3)

Translation

Oh, Lord, in every age You did on Earth incarnate
And succour Your subjects for thousands of years,
Assuming postures many; Still, should I for long be apart
From you and Your consort Divine and languish, right here?

Note

The Āḻvār rightly questions the Lord who incarnated, in many ways and on many occasions, to succour His devotees, whether He cannot incarnate once more, for his sake. As, Śrī Rāma, the Lord walked through the depopulated forests where very few could enjoy His entrancing gait. And now, why should He not walk in front of the Āḻvār, yearning to behold His majestic gait, at least once in a way?

taḷarntum muṟintum, cakaṭa acurar uṭal vēṟāp
piḷantu vīya, tiruk kāl āṇṭa perumāṉē!
kiḷarntu piramaṉ, civaṉ, intiraṉ, viṇṇavar cūḻa,
viḷaṅka, orunāḷ kāṇa vārāy-viṇmītē. (VI–9–4)

Translation

Oh, Lord, Your mighty feet dashed to pieces
The demon in the cart-wheel; appear at least once

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Up in the sky along with Piramaṉ, Civaṉ and other Devas
So that I may enjoy the sight of your grand galaxy.

Note

The Lord's feet afford protection not only to us all, His subjects, but to the Lord, as well. Baby Kṛṣṇa was fast asleep in the cart, an improvised cradle, when a demon entered the cart-wheel. The Babe cried for milk and the legs kicked violently against the wheel, shattering the demon to pieces. Therefore it is, the text in this song (original) contains a phrase (Tirukkālāṇṇa Perumāṉ) which denotes that the Lord got many a thing accomplished through His feet. It should indeed not be difficult for the Lord to concede the Āḻvar's request, as impediments, if any, could easily be overcome by the Lord's feet.

viṇmītu iruppāy! malaimēl niṟpāy! kaṭal cēṟppāy!
maṇmītu uḻalvāy! ivaṟṟuḷ eṅkum maṟaintu uṟaivāy!
eṉ mītu iyaṉṟa puṟa aṇṭattāy! eṇatu āvi-
uḷmītu āṭi, uruk kāṭṭātē oḷippāyō? (VI–9–5)

Translation

Oh, Lord. (in Your transcendent glory) You stay in High Heaven,
Stand do You in Mount (Tiruvēṅkaṭaṁ, in Your Iconic Form),
You recline on the Milk-ocean and on Earth You'd roam
(In Your Incarnate Forms); invisible You'd remain
Inside all things and beings, innumerable are the regions far beyond,
Which You pervade; should you hide yourself after stimulating my mind?

Notes

(i) The five different manifestations of the Lord, namely, 'Para', 'Vyūha', 'Vibhava', 'Antaryāmi' and 'Arca' are set out here. The 'Vyūha' denotes the Lord's seat of creative activity, namely, the Milk-ocean; all the other aspects have been indicated in the verse itself, within brackets.

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(ii) The Āḻvār longs for the external perception of the Lord inside, in His 'Divya Maṅgala Vigraha' (exclusive Form of exquisite charm).

pāy ōr aṭi vaittu, ataṉ kīḻ paravai nilam ellām
tāy, ōr aṭiyāl ellā ulakum taṭavanta
māyōṉ! uṉṉaik kaṇpāṉ varunti, eṉainālum
tīyōṭu uṭaṉcēr meḻukāy, ulakil tirivēṉō? (VI–9–6)

Translation

My wondrous Lord, encompass You did, in just one pace,
The entire land by oceans surrounded and by another
Pervaded all the regions above; in vain do I bother
To behold You, how long more should I in this world suffer
Like wax close to fire ere we come face to face?

Note

There was a time when the Lord was after the Āḻvār, trying to reclaim the errant soul, straying away from Him and eluding His grasp. But now, it is the other way round; the Āḻvār is madly after the Lord. Who is eluding him. The Āḻvār's plight is like that of the wax close to fire, as distinguished from wax actually placed on fire, neither dead nor alive, in the true sense.

ulakil tiriyum karuma kati āy, ulakam āy,
ulakukkē ōr uyirum āṉāy! puṟa aṇṭattu
alakil polinta ticai pattu āya aruvēyō!
alakil polinta aṟivilēṉukku aruḷāyē. (VI–9–7)

Translation

My Lord, You are the Super-Soul of both the visible and the invisible,
The acts and the performers in all the worlds besides the souls innumerable
In the regions afar, the released souls whose knowledge permeates
Ten directions; shed unto me, with failings innumerable, Your sweet grace.

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Notes

The sentient beings (intelligent souls, embodied) and the non-sentient matter, which constitute the worlds, form the body of God and they are inseparably related to Him, as attributes are to a substance, body to the soul.

Whosoever performs acts as the means for securing certain objectives, owes the very performance of those acts to the Lord who endowed them with body and limbs but for which they can't function in the manner they are doing. And then, the reward due, in respect of such performance, is also made by Him.

aṟivilēṉukku aruḷāy, aṟivār uyir āṉāy!
veṟī koḷ cōti mūrtti! aṭiyeṉ neṭumālē!
kiṟiceytu, eṉṉaip puṟattiṭṭu, iṉṉam keṭuppāyō-
piṟitu oṉṟu aṟiyā aṭiyēṉ āvi tikaikkavē? (VI–9–8)

Translation

Oh, Lord, in the gnostics your very Soul You find,
Your Form resplendent is full of fragrance, unto me You bear
Inordinate love, Your grace on this ignoramus please do confer,
I look upon You as my Sole Refuge, pray do not confound;
To put me astray thro' some mischief, do You still intend?

Note

In the preceding song, the Āḻvār invoked the Lord's grace and yet, the Lord did not condescend to come unto him. The Āḻvār grows sceptical about the Lord's intentions whether He still tries to confound him and unsettle his firm conviction that the Lord's lovely feet constitute his sole Refuge, making him slip back to his old ways.

āvi tikaikka, aivar kumaikkum ciṟṟiṉpam
pāviyēṉaip pala nī kāṭṭip paṭuppāyō?
tāvi vaiyam koṇṭa taṭam tāmaraikaṭkē
kūvik koḷḷum kālam iṉṉam kuṟukātō? (VI–9–9)

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Translation

My Lord, won't you cut out the interval and in Heaven bind
Me unto Your lotus feet large which spanned the worlds
Or do You intend to finish this sinner off and confound my mind,
Keeping me unto petty pleasures of the senses five exposed?

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār prays unto the Lord that He need no longer persevere in the dangerous experiment of keeping him in this land of nescience, where the senses have free play. Nampiḷḷai, in his unique diction, would put it, as a preamble to this song, the Āḻvār telling the Lord, " You ask me what mischief You have played unto me; let me tell You that Your exposing me to the vagaries of the senses is the farthest limit up to which Your mischief can go. I very well knew, the day You put me in this harrowing world, You actually buried me alive and put spadefuls of earth on top ".

(ii) When Nañcīyar was at the bed side of ailing Tirukkurukaippirāṉ Piḷḷāṉ (one of the commentators of Tiruvāymoḻi), the latter was heard repeating the last line of this song (as in the original text), " Will not the final call from Heaven come quick?". Nañcīyar started sobbing, on hearing this, pained by the thought of the master passing away from their midst. The illustrious Piḷḷāṉ, however, called the Cīyar to order, asking him, " What indeed moves you thus, to tears? Do you really think that the Heavenly bliss is inferior to our sojourn here? "

kuṟukā, nīḷā, iṟutikūṭā eṉai ūḻi
ciṟukā, perukā, aḷavu il iṉpam cērntālum,
maṟu kāl iṉṟi, māyōṉ! uṉakkē āḷākum
ciṟu kālattai uṟumō antō! teriyilē? (VI–9–10)

Translation

Oh, wondrous Lord, the so-called bliss, in disembodied state
On final emancipation, is no doubt eternal and changeless at any time,

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But, alas! can it ever match the bliss of service at Your feet
Even if it be but once and that, only for a short time?

Note

Reference to the petty pleasures, prompted by the five senses, was made by the Āḻvār in the last song. This would appear to have raised a doubt in the Lord's mind whether or not the Āḻvār eschewed the 'Kaivalya Mokṣa', which was everlasting, undergoing no modification, at any time. The Āḻvār, therefore, hastens to clarify his stand in this regard, as well. The so-called bliss of enjoying one's own self endlessly, in the disembodied state, is hardly worth a day's purchase. It cannot stand any comparison with the bliss of rendering service at the Lord's feet, even if it be for a short while.

terital, niṉaital, eṉṉal ākāt tirumālukku
uriya toṇṭar toṇṭar toṇṭaṉ caṭakōpaṉ
teriyac coṉṉa ōr āyirattuḷ ip pattum
uriya toṇṭar ākkum, ulakam uṇṭāṟkē. (VI–9–11)

Translation

Those that learn these songs ten
Out of the profound thousand, composed by Caṭakōpaṉ,
The vassal of the vassals' vassals, the eternal Servants
Of Tirumāl Whom mere learning or contemplation
Or meditation cannot gauge, will become the exclusive servants
Of the Lord Supreme, Who did all the worlds gulp down.

Note

The Lord is, no doubt, to be realised through learning, contemplation and meditation but all these, by themselves, will be of no avail, unless accompanied by deep love for Him. The Āḻvār plunges himself down to the bottom-most depth of service, like unto the extremely thirsty diving into the deep pocket of water in the river bed. This is the only way by which he could ward off the postures of the worldlings on

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the one hand, and the intensity of his longing for communion with the Lord, on the other. In this very vein, the Āḻvār spells out the benefit accruing from the recital of the songs in this decad, namely, getting absorbed in the intimate service of the Supreme Lord.

Sixth Centum—Tenth Decad (VI-10)
(Ulakam uṇṭa Peruvāyā)

Preamble

In the last decad, the Āḻvār voiced forth, in deep anguish, his inordinate longing for communion with the Lord, so as to be audible to Him, right in Heaven. And yet, there has been no response from the Lord and the Āḻvār is, therefore, in a state of extreme mental distress and physical debility. He is, however, quick to realise that the Lord stands enshrined in holy Tiruvēṅkaṭam (Andhra Pradesh), the common meeting ground of the 'Nitya Sūrīs' (Eternal Heroes in Heaven), the 'Nitya Samsārīs' (worldlings), birds and beasts. At this holy centre, the Āḻvār seeks refuge at the feet of the Lord through the good offices of the Divine Mother, inseparably poised on His winsome chest, voicing forth his sole dependence on Him. In the first nine songs of this decad, the Āḻvār dwells upon the glory and grandeur of the Lord, the Great Saviour, and, in the tenth, he surrenders at His feet, the Sole Refuge. No doubt, the Āḻvār had surrendered himself earlier also at the feet of the Lord, enshrined in other Pilgrim centres, c.f. IV-9, V-7 and V-8, but there is as much difference between those and the one currently resorted to, as between 'Tirumantram' and 'Dvayam'. While the holy conjunction of Mahālakṣmī, the Divine Mother and the Lord is but implicit in the former, it is explicit in the latter, as in this decad, vide tenth song.

ulakam uṇṭa peruvāyā! ulappu il kīrtti ammāṉē!
nilavum cuṭar cūḻ oḷi mūrtti! neṭiyāy! aṭiyēṉ ār uyirē!
tilatam ulakukku āy niṉṟa tiruvēṅkaṭattu em perumāṉē!
kula toḷ aṭiyēṉ uṇa pātam kūṭum āṟu kūṟāyē. (VI–10–1)

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Translation

My Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, the bright vermilion mark on Cosmos' face!
With Your mammoth mouth You gulped down the whole Universe
And thus retrieving it, gained peerless fame;
Of supernal form resplendent, Thou art Supreme,
Dearest unto me, Your humble vassal from generations,
To attain Your feet, Your grace I invoke with veneration.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār prays that he should be enabled to enjoy the beatific bliss, in close proximity to the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam. The Āḻvār's grief, in not being able to get at the Lord's feet, calls for the same attention on His part, as the great deluge when He did sustain all the worlds, with their contents, inside His stomach. All that fame, He derived by that great gesture, will be totally nullified in case He didn't relieve the Āḻvār's distress.

(ii) The great Saviour is indeed large-mouthed, as the Āḻvār puts it. Pledged to protect the supplicants who seek refuge in Him, He goes the whole hog out and still does not feel satisfied that He has done enough for them, as in the case of Draupati-*an insatiable hunger for protecting those who seek protection.* At His bidding, enemies turn friends. A serpent, named Sumukha, sought Lord Kṛṣṇa's refuge and protection against the fearful raids of Garuḍa, the tribal enemy of the serpent race. The Lord vouchsafed protection to Sumukha, invited Garuḍa and consigned the former to the latter's care. Garuḍa, the inveterate enemy, had thus to lay aside his racial enmity and befriend Sumukhā; the erstwhile oppressor becomes the protector, oh, how potent is the Lord's will!

kūṟu āy, nīṟu āy, nilaṉ āki, koṭu val acurar kulam ellām
cīṟā eriyum tiru nēmi valavā! teyvak kōmāṉē!
cēṟu ār cuṇait tāmarai centī malarum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṉē!
āṟā aṉpil aṭiyēṉ uṉ aṭicēr vaṇṇam aruḷāyē. (VI–10–2)

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Translation

Oh, Supreme Lord, residing in Tiruvēṅkaṭam in whose cloddy ponds
The lotus blossoms fiery red and holding in Your right hand,
The hissing discus effulgent, which cut, burnt and razed to the ground
Hordes of monstrous Rākṣasas, pray shed Your grace sweet
Unto me of limitless love, to enable me to attain Your feet.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār prays unto the Lord holding the discus, the great destroyer of all enemies, to destroy his enemies also and take him unto His lovely feet, so that His stay on mount Tiruvēṅkaṭam could indeed be fruitful.

(ii) The Āḻvār's God-love is an inexhaustible fountain which won't dry up even if the ponds in Tiruvēṅkaṭam went dry; that is because all that knowledge, which blossomed into intellectual love of God, was dowered on him by the Lord Himself. (I–I–1).

vaṇṇam maruḷ koḷ aṇi mēkavaṇṇā! māya ammāṉē!
eṉṉam pukuntu tittikkum amutē! imaiyōr atipatiyē!
teḷ nal aruvi maṇi poṉ muttu alaikkum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṉē!
aṉṉalē! uṉ aṭi cēra, aṭiyēṟku āā! eṉṉāyē. (VI–10–3)

Translation

Oh, Lord of Celestials, beaming in Tiruvēṅkaṭam, whose cascades clear and lovely,
Bring in rubies, gold and pearls in plenty,
Of wondrous traits, my cloud-hued Sire! grace personified You are,
My heart you do sweeten as you enter,
Take pity on me and let me your feet attain, my Master!

Note

The Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam is the very embodiment of grace; He, who imparted unalloyed knowledge to the Āḻvār,

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resulting in his single-minded devotion to the Lord, should also help him to attain His feet. This is the humble submission of the Āḻvār.

āā! eṉṉātu ulakattai alaikkum acurar vāḻ-nāḷmēl
tī vāy vāḻi maḷai poḻinta cilaiyā! tiru mā makaḷ kēḷvā!
tēvā! curarkaḷ, muṉikkaṇaṅkaḷ virumpum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṉē!
pū ār kaḷalkāḷ aruviṉaiyēṉ poruntumāṟu puṇarāyē. (VI–10–4)

Translation

Oh, Tirumāmakaḷ's Spouse Divine, residing in Tiruvēṅkaṭam,
Adored by sages and Celestials, in strength, arrows spitting fire,
You, great Archer, did on the unrelenting Acurar shower,
Teach this sinner dire how to attain Your florid feet, my Sanctum.

Notes

(i) The Āḻvār tells the Lord that none of the means, outlined in the Śāstrās for attaining His feet, has been of any avail to him and that He should, therefore, teach him yet another way, implying thereby that, for him, the Lord should at once be the 'Means' and the 'End', the path and the goal.

A disciple of Naṅcīyar caused him great mental pain by questioning the need for the act of Surrender to God (plainly indicative of something done, out of one's own free will), if God is our only Means of salvation and there is nothing for us to do. It is a pity, the questioner did not receive the sacred truth of 'Prapatti', resignation to God, in good faith and failed to appreciate the spirit underlying it, namely, our free-will inclining to God's grace is itself due to His grace. Naṅcīyar regretted very much that he should have passed on to the questioner (not truly responsive) this sacred truth, handed down, as a holy legacy, through an unbroken succession of preceptors. Smiting his palm against his forehead, he retired to his private chamber, moved with pity and sorrow at the obduracy of

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men's hearts in not receiving and understanding such sacred truths, in their proper perspective.

(ii) *Unrelenting Acurar*: The Asuras are the ungodly, who inflict miseries on their fellow-beings. The great Nañciyar taught his disciples to distinguish the Godly from the otherwise, as follows: We may console ourselves as related to God, if our hearts are moved with compassion when any ill befalls others; if, on the other hand, we gloat over others' miseries, surely, we are cast away from Him.

puṇarā niṉṟa maram ēḻ aṉṟu eyta oru vil valavā! ō!
puṇar ēy niṉṟa maram iraṇṭiṉ naṭuvē pōṉa mutalvā! ō!
tiṇar ār mēkam eṉak kaḷiṟu cērum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṉē!
tiṇar ārcārṅkattu uṉa pātam cērvatu aṭiyēṉ, ennāḷē? (VI–10–5)

Translation

Thou art the unique Archer, Whose shaft once sped
Thro' the *Sal* trees seven huddled together,
The Primate Who 'twixt the twin (*Maruta*) trees crawled,
And art now in Tiruvēṅkaṭam where elephants do gather,
Akin to dense clouds; My Lord, wielding the bow mighty,
When shall this vassal reach Thy feet doughty?

Notes

(i) The Lord would appear to have told the Āḻvār that He was surely taking him to His abode in Heaven; the expectant Āḻvār is, however, not satisfied with a general assurance of this kind and insists that a date be set for the consummation.

(ii) It can be both ways, namely, elephants gathering like clouds and clouds gathering like elephants, in that holy mountain. The Lord, enshrined there, is Himself referred to, as the cloud adorning the crest of Veṅkaṭādri (Mount Tiruvēṅkaṭam)—"Śri Veṅkaṭādri śikharālaya Kāḷamekham". Saint Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār also refers to the Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam as the Elephant, adorning the North.

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(iii) The mighty bow in the Lord's hand is quite reassuring and the Āḻvār is, therefore, sanguine of attaining to His feet. All that He wants now is that the Lord should graciously specify the point of time at which he would be lifted up.

ennāḷē nām maṇ aḷanta iṇait tāmaraikaḷ kāṇpataṟku eṉṟu,
ennāḷum niṉṟu imaiyōrkaḷ ētti, iṟaiñci iṇam iṟamāy
meyn nā maṇattāl vaḻipāṭu ceyyum tiruveṅkaṭattāṉē!
meyn nāṉ eyti, en nāḷ uṉ aṭikkaṇ aṭiyēṉ mēvuvatē? (VI–10–6)

Translation

Enshrined in Tiruvēṅkaṭam where do wait reverently, days on end,
Groups of Celestials, to worship Your lotus feet, the pair that spanned
The Universe, and meditate on You by word, deed and thought,
Oh, Lord! when shall this vassal, in reality, attain Your feet?

Note

There was indeed no need for the Lord to set a date for His union with the Āḻvār, as desired by him, in the preceding song; he could very well enjoy that bliss, right here, at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, where even 'Nitya Sūris' come down from Heaven and worship. And so, he would not like to miss that bliss, near at hand.

aṭiyēṉ mēvi amarkiṉṟa amutē! imaiyōr atipatiyē!
koṭiyā aṭu puḷ uṭaiyāṉē! kōlak kaṉivāyp perumāṉē!
ceṭi ār viṇaikaḷ tīr maruntē! tiruvēṅkaṭattu em perumāṉē!
noṭi ār poḻutum uṇa pātam kāṇa nōlātu, ārṟēṉē! (VI–10–7)

Translation

You are the Nectar, by this vassal enjoyed, Oh, Lord of Celestials,
On Your banner is Garuḍa Who the enemies burns out, for dense ills
You are the panacea, Oh, Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, Your lips attractive

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Like unto lovely fruit, I am eager to behold; I am indeed restive,
Brooking no delay, not a trice, in worshipping Your feet,
Although I have to my credit no special rite.

Notes

(i) It is the insatiable Nectar, deeply imbedded in the mind of the Āḻvār, that he hastens to behold physically. All this flutter, on his part, is not because of any misgiving regarding the attainment of the goal but because of his inability to brook the delay in getting at it, overwhelmed by its grandeur.

(ii) '*The Nectar by this vassal enjoyed*', is yet another addition to the long list of the Lord's holy names, similar to the one coined by the Āḻvār earlier, '*The One in me mingled*', vide II-5-2. The Nectar, enjoyed by the Āḻvār, is indeed far superior to the one said to have been enjoyed by the Devas, a mere salt extract, in comparison to the current enjoyment of the Āḻvār, and, for the matter of that, the Āḻvār's manner of enjoyment is unique, by-no-means comparable with that of others.

(iii) This song (as per the text in the original) is being chanted by the devout while making offerings of dishes to the Lord, as part of worship, as ordained by Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar.

nōlātu āṟṟēṉ uṉa pātam kāṇa eṉṟu, nuṉ uṇarviṉ
nīl ār kaṇṭattu ammāṉum, niṟai nāṉmukaṉum, intiraṉum-
cēl ēy kaṇṇār palar cūḻa-virumpum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṉē!
mālāy mayakki, aṭiyēṉpāl vantāy pōlē vārāyē. (VI–10–8)

Translation

My Lord, dwelling in Tiruvēṅkaṭam, unto you do resort
The revered blue-necked Sire (Śivā) of intelligence acute,
Nāṉmukaṉ, of knowledge consummate, and Intiraṉ, saying that inadequate
Is their equipment to worship Your feet and with their consorts

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Of bewitching looks, they eagerly serve You; pray do appear
Before this dependant, as did the entrancing Kaṇṇaṉ before
His parents dear.

Note

Apprehending the possibility of the Lord keeping aloof, in view of the inadequacy, rather, absence of any equipment, worth the name, in the Āḻvār, referred to by him already, in the preceding song, he now claims parity, in this regard, with those in the higher echelons. Even the Celestials, at the top, suffer from inadequacy in this respect, despite their massive learning, acute intellect and great prowess. Still, they do come down to Tiruvēṅkaṭam, along with their consorts, to serve the Lord, with great zeal.

vantāy pōlē vārātāy! vārātāy pōl varuvāṉē!
centāmaraik kaṇ, ceṅkaṇi vāy, nāl tōḷ amutē! eṉatu uyirē!
cintāmaṇikaḷ pakar allaip pakal cey tiruvēṅkaṭattāṉē!
antō! aṭiyēṉ uṉa pātam akalakillēṉ, iṟaiyumē. (VI–10–9)

Translation

Oh, Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam, where gems of unique sheen
Make the night shine like day, You are seemingly near, yet far,
But when (in despair), You seem afar, You draw near;
With lotus eyes red, lips like ripe fruit, Your Form nectarean,
With shoulders four, is unto me dearest; from Your feet,
Alas! this humble lover cannot, for a moment, be apart.

Notes

(i) The gems could refer either to those in the sacred Mount or those embedded in the Jewels on the Lord's person.

(ii) The Āḻvār's mental vision of the Lord was so full and complete that he could easily mistake it for physical perception, in three dimensions; when, out of deep yearning, he held out his arms for embracing the Lord, he would be disillusioned, rather extremely disappointed. Again, at a time, when the Āḻvār would not have the faintest hope of enjoying the Lord's vision, the Lord

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would suddenly present Himself before his mind's eye. As a matter of fact, we have witnessed such fluctuations and vicissitudes, all along.

akalakillēṉ iṟaiyum eṉṟu alarmēl maṅkai uṟai mārpā!
nikar il pukaḻāy! ulakam mūṉṟu uṭaiyāy! eṉṉai āḷvāṉē!
nikar il amarar, muṉikkaṇaṅkaḷ virumpum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṉē!
pukal oṉṟu illā aṭiyēṉ uṉ aṭikkīḻ amarntu pukuntēṉē.
(VI–10–10)

Translation

Oh, Resident of Tiruvēṅkaṭam, reverently sought by the peerless Amarars
And sages in their bunches, on Your winsome chest inheres
The Divine Mother who from a flower emerged, ever saying that
From You she shall not for a moment be apart;
Of incomparable glory, You are the Lord of all the three worlds,
And at Your feet lovely, this vassal squarely takes refuge, with no other hold.

Notes

(i) In the preceding nine songs, the Āḻvār described the Lord's greatness and grandeur and also gave vent to his deep yearning to get at Him. And now, he takes refuge at the Lord's feet, seeking the good offices of the Divine Mother, ever present on the Lord's chest, so as to accelerate his union with the Lord. While doing so, he gives expression to his abject destitution and exclusive dependence on the Lord. It has to be noted that the Āḻvār is still seated in lotus pose, inside the hollow of the tamarined tree at Tirunakari. Of the three types of 'Prapatti', surrender to the Lord's loving grace, by word, deed or thought, this one falls under the first category, 'vācika' (Añjali, paramā mudrā kṣipraṁ Devaprasādinī).

(ii) The Divine Mother, Lakṣmī, the lotus-born, is inseparably poised on the Lord's chest and yet, why should she keep uttering the words, "From you, I shall not, for a moment,

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be apart"? As the saying goes, "A thing is too good to last long". No wonder, in the exuberance of her enjoyment of the Lord's nectarean person, the Mother is, side by side, haunted by the fear of getting dislodged from this exhilarating milieu and hence, her constant submission, as above.

aṭikkiḻamarntu pukuntu, aṭiyīr, vāḻmiṉ eṉṟu eṉṟu aruḷ koṭukkum
paṭik kēḷ illāp perumānaip paḷaṉak kurukūrc caṭakōpaṉ
muṭippāṉ coṉṉa āyirattut tiruvēṅkaṭattukku ivai pattum
piṭittār piṭittār vīṟṟiruntu periya vāṉuḷ nilāvuvarē. (VI–10–11)

Translation

Those that recite or listen to these songs ten,
Which unto holy Tiruvēṅkaṭam pertain,
Out of the thousand sung by Kurukūr Caṭakōpaṉ
To cut out worldly ties, in sweet adoration
Of the peerless Lord, Who His feet exhibits for ever,
Exhorting the devotees to take refuge therein,
Will in High Heaven for ever remain.

Notes

(i) The thousand songs were sung by Saint Nammāḻvār, stung by the severe fright of the worldly distractions and the mischief of the unruly senses, in order to cut out the worldly ties, vide also VI-9-9.

(ii) These ten songs are made over to Tiruvēṅkaṭam, out of the thousand, meant, as a whole, to adore Lord Raṅganātha, enshrined in the walled city of Śrīraṅgam.

(iii) The Lord at Tiruvēṅkaṭam stands in a unique pose, His right hand pointing to the dazzling feet below, to show that there and there alone lies our salvation. It is worth recalling, in this context, sloka 110 of the first centum, in Śrī Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's Śrī Raṅgarāja Stavam, "Kirīṭaṁ Śrī Raṅge śayithuḥ....." It is said that, in His reclining posture, Lord Raṅganātha

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is touching the crown on His head with one hand, while the other hand, stretching down to His knee, points to His lotus feet; the former proclaims His overlordship, the supreme sovereignty over Brahmā, Śiva and all else, while the latter reveals His easy accessibility, offering His lotus feet, as the sole Refuge of His devotees.

THE CENTUM IN RETROSPECT (DECAD—WISE SUMMARY)

(VI-1): *In the opening decad of this centum*, the Lord seeks out the Lord, in His worshippable Form at Tiruvaṇvaṇṭūr (in Kerala State). Being too feeble to reach that place, the Āḻvār, once again transformed as the Nāyakī, in a forlorn state, sends some birds and bees to convey her message to the Lord, in His Incarnate Form (a gathered from the tenth song of this decad), invoking His pledge to extend protection to His devotees;

(This is the second of the four decads in the whole work, where the Āḻvār *(transformed as Nāyakī)* sends emissaries to the Lord at various destinations, to convey her message to Him; the earlier one is I-4 and the later ones are VI-8 and IX-7).

(VI-2) : In response to the message sent, as in the opening decad, the Lord eventually presents Himself before the Nāyakī who is, however, seen, *in the second decad*, resenting His delayed appearance. With the characteristic feminine jealousy and rancour, the Nāyakī arraigns the Lord for having apparently strayed elsewhere, making love to the damsels of His special preference, and asks Him to go back to them. This is virtually a re-enactment of Kṛṣṇa-Gopīs episode of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam; the rancour of the overzealous Gopīs would obviously not last long, being but an interim facet of connubial relationship, culminating in the reunion of the all-conquering Lover and His beloveds;

(VI-3) : The Saint keeps musing over the superior might of the Lord, in having got him round, despite his stout resolve not to have anything to do with that malingering defaulter, any more. The Lord reveals to the Āḻvār His extraordinary capacity for achieving the impossible and reconciling the incompatibles besides the glorious Iconic Form in which He stays in Tiruviṇṇakar (in Tamil Nadu, near Tirukkuṭantai, already covered in V-8). The Āḻvār recounts his current experience, *in the third decad*;

(VI-4) : His erstwhile emotional break-down and exhaustion having yielded place to exhilaration, we see the Āḻvār recounting, *in the fourth decad*, the Lord's glorious deeds and activities besides giving vent to his extraordinary joy, resulting from such recital *cum* contemplation. The Āḻvār concludes

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each song, in this decad, by showering on himself praises like "There is none equal to me in all the land", "There is none above me" etc., expressions of an ecstatic mind, dissolved in God-love;

(VI-5) : *In the fifth decad*, the Nāyakī's (Āḻvār's) mates tell the elderly women around about the profusion of the Nāyaki's love unto the Lord, enshrined in Tolaivillimaṅkalam (deep south in Tamil Nadu). The mates keep guessing whether the Nāyakī could be but Nappiṇṇai (Lord Kṛṣṇa's favourite Consort) reborn or an Incarnation of Mother Earth, full of grace or Mahālakṣmī Herself;

(VI-6) : The gnostic mother speaks out, *in the sixth decad*, the desperate condition of her love-lorn daughter (Āḻvār); the manner in which the latter is dwindling down, losing, one by one, her feminine charms and embellishments. As the Nāyakī meditates on the wondrous deeds performed by the Lord in each of His various incarnations and the special traits, then exhibited by Him, she goes into raptures and her body thaws down and dwindles;

(VI-7) : The mother continues her narration—*in the seventh decad* also, voicing forth the Nāyakī's extraordinary devotion to the Lord at Tirukkōḷūr (a pilgrim centre, also deep south, in Tamil Nadu), her inordinate longing for incessant communion with Him;

(VI-8) : The Nāyakī, who set out for the coveted Tirukkōḷūr, could not reach the place, bogged down, *en route*, due to her intense God-love; stranded half-way through, she sends messages through birds etc., *as in the eighth decad*, to the Lord in His 'Para' (transcendent) and 'Antaryāmi' (hidden form as Internal Controller of all beings), invoking His trait of 'aikarasya' (feeling of oneness with His devotees);

(This is the third decad of this pattern, the earlier ones being I-4 and VI-1; one more, namely, IX-7 will follow).

(VI-9) : His errands, as in the eighth decad, not having evoked the desired response, the Āḻvār raises, *in the ninth decad*, his own clarion call of deep yearning, reaching the very heaven, with robust faith in the fruition of his full-throated call for deliverance;

(VI-10) : In the ninth decad, the Āḻvār voiced forth, in deep anguish, his inordinate longing for communion with the Lord, so as to be audible to Him, right in the high Heaven. And yet, there has been no response from the Lord, reducing the Āḻvār to a state of extreme mental distress and physical debility. He is, however, quick to realise that the Lord stays, in His worshippable Form, in holy Tiruvēṅkaṭam (Andhra Pradesh), the common meeting ground of 'Nitya Sūris' (ever-free angels in Heaven), the 'Samsāris' (worldlings) on Earth, birds and beasts. *In the first nine songs of the concluding centum of this decad*, the Āḻvār dwells upon the glory and grandeur of the Lord, the great Saviour and, *in the tenth*, he seeks refuge at the feet of the Lord, through the good offices of Lakṣmī, the Divine Mother, inseparably poised on His winsome chest, voicing forth his sole dependence on Him.

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